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BRICHANTEAU
ACTOR-

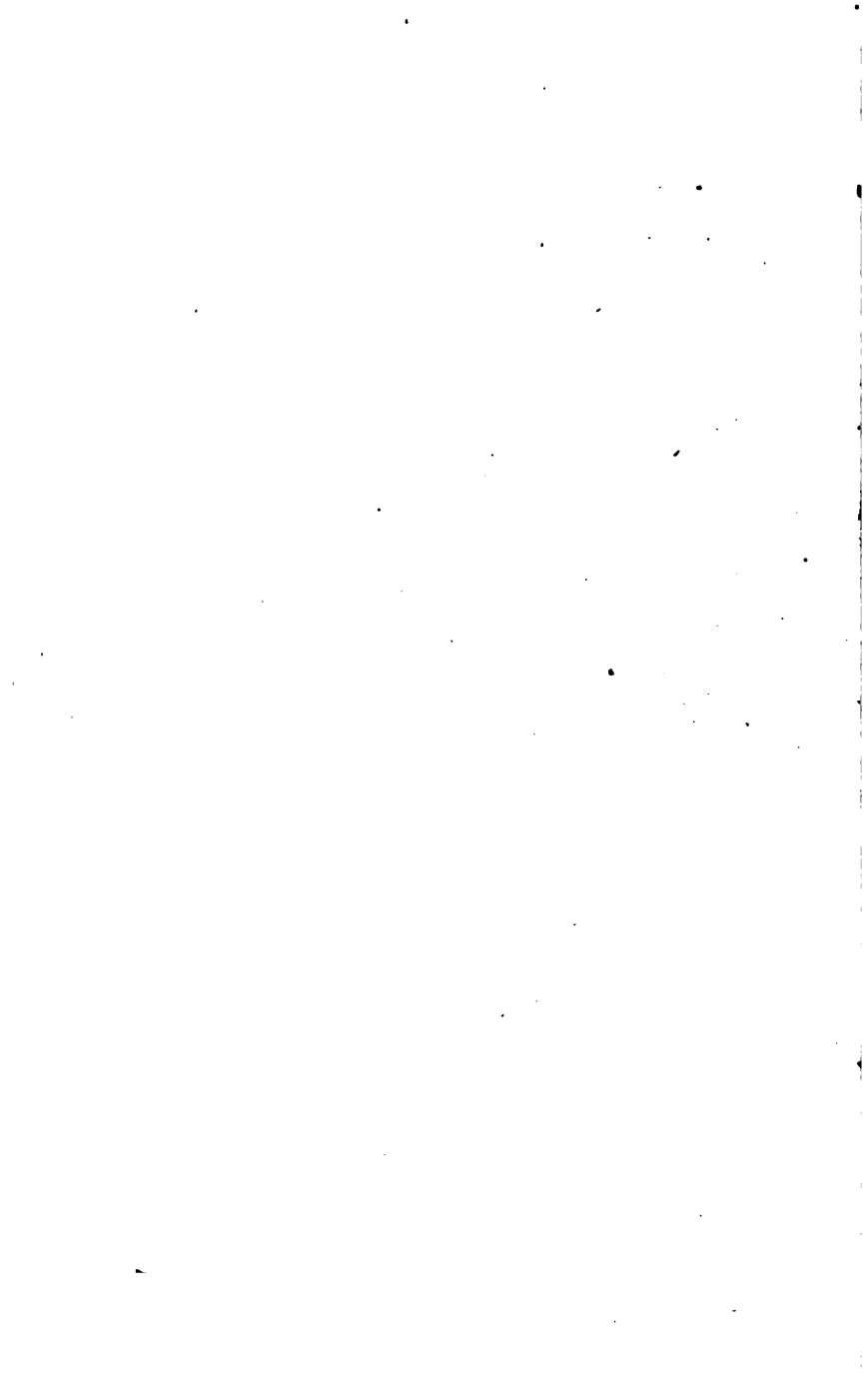


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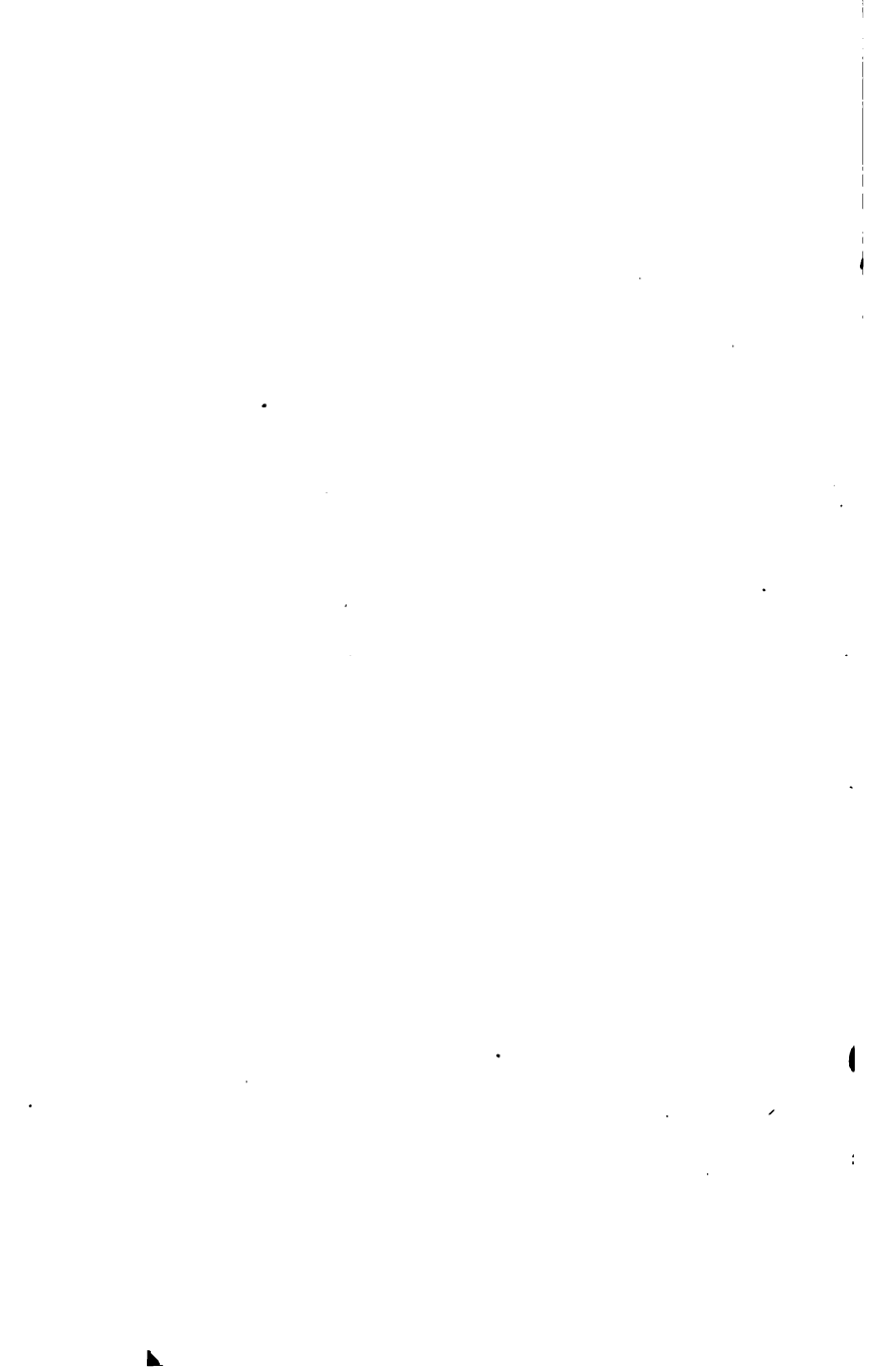
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**PRESENTED BY
MRS. PRIESTLY MORRISON
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BRICHANTEAU



BRICHANTEAU

Actor

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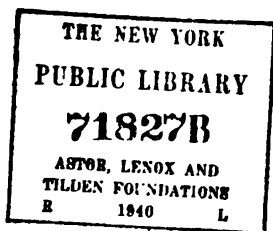
JULES CLARETIE



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BRICHANTEAU, ACTOR.

Dedication.

LIFE on the stage is the never-ending race for the Chimera.

I dedicate this book, in which I have set down, with so many souvenirs from my own experience, many confidences of the vanquished in the dramatic art, to the artists of the Comédie-Française, those glorious actors who have been my collaborators during more than ten years of my life.

More fortunate than the wanderer whose joyous or illusory adventures I have related, they have not lived that haphazard life. They know these distresses that they may alleviate them. Being the privileged ones of the art, they have more pity than any one else for its castaways.

I trust that they will find in these sincere pages some truth which may remind them of comrades left behind them on the road in the great journey toward glory ; and, surely, a full expression of the sympathy of a man of letters who, as director or dramatic author, has always loved those who have battled with him — or for him.

JULES CLARETIE.



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JULES CLARETIE.

THE name of M. Jules Claretie is, I imagine, as well known in New York as it is in France. And this, not only because the man who bears it occupies a high official position, but also because he is the general manager of the Comédie Française, an academician, and a commander in the Legion of Honor. All this has undoubtedly added to his reputation and contributed to spread it beyond the frontiers. But his chief title to fame is the number and importance of his works.

M. Jules Claretie is what is called a polygraph. He has always taken a lively and intelligent interest in a great variety of subjects. History, current events, the fine arts, the novel, the stage, have all, in turn, engaged his attention. He is one of those who may be said to have taken for their motto, *Nulla dies sine linea* — "Let no day pass without writing something." He writes with an ease and felicity of expression which do not exclude, in the historian, a decided taste for exact documentation, nor, in the novel-

ist, habits of precise observation and profound reflection.

He has, above all, a singularly keen sense for discovering subjects that are, as we say, in the air. I mean by this subjects which, without having been yet discussed, are in some sort expected by the public. It was in this way that he came to write "*M. le Ministre*," a novel which has already reached its seventieth edition. *M. le Ministre* is the politician who, a year after arriving from his province, and still unfamiliar with Parisian life, suddenly finds himself, thanks to the parliamentary game of chance, raised to the office of Minister of the Home Department.

He becomes puffed up with pride; he snatches eagerly at the joys which power gives; he devours greedily the pleasures of his new existence; he falls into the hands of a woman against whom a true Parisian would have easily defended himself, but who takes possession of this unsophisticated soul and moulds it to her will. The first hundred pages of the novel are among the most brilliant in our contemporary literature.

M. Jules Claretie has had a wide acquaintance with actors. For he has put upon the stage, and consequently has had rehearsed, some plays which had an immense success, —

"Princesse Zilah," "Les Mascadins," and "Marceau." But he has had an opportunity of studying them still more closely since he has been the manager of the Comédie Française, for he has constantly had to bear with their foibles and their eccentricities, at the same time that he has learned to esteem their great and sterling qualities.

In this way it was that the idea occurred to him of writing "Brichanteau." Brichanteau is a type which is probably unknown to you in America, but examples of which are numerous among us. He is the actor enamoured of his art, but who, for one reason or another, has not achieved success; he is the man who has failed in his career, — to use an expression brought into fashion by Alphonse Daudet, — but he is a failure without melancholy or envy, an optimist failure.

Brichanteau had received rich gifts from nature, — a voice which drowned the thundering voice of Beauvallet, his master, a quick intelligence, and a love for his profession. He would have entered, had Heaven so willed it, the Comédie Française, where he would have shone beside Maubant. But fate was against him. Beauvallet was jealous of his powerful organ, and did him an ill turn. Instead of pursuing the path which would lead to fame and fortune,

Brichanteau went astray at the cross-roads. He made the tour of the provincial theatres; he played, according as his engagements chanced to require, the best and the worst parts; he was, by turn, Orestes in "Andromache," Andrès in "Les Pirates de la Savane," Ruy Silva in Victor Hugo's "Hernani," and Orsini in "La Tour de Nesle." He had even been a monk in the "Huguenots," and a man-at-arms in "Geneviève de Brabant," without considering himself lowered thereby. There is no humiliation in discharging the lowest functions when one does it with the consciousness of rendering a service to art.

As he grew older he grew poorer, but still without losing his dignity. Finally, to avoid dying of starvation, he accepted an insignificant employment in the vélodrome of Buffalo Bill. He became a "starter" in the cycle races. It was his duty to give the signals. These functions, however little brilliant they might be, gave him the occasion for making some graceful gestures, and these gestures, which were really artistic, compensated him for his mortifications; he needed but very little to console him.

You are, of course, familiar with Dolobella in Alphonse Daudet's celebrated novel, "Fromont, Risler, and Company." Brichanteau has certain points of resemblance with Dolobella.

They are, however, very different men. Dolorbello is an egotist who sacrifices everything, including his wife and daughter, to his devouring pride; and who is not even conscious of the sufferings which he inflicts on the victims of his vanity, which in the end becomes fatal to them.

Brichanteau injures no one. His harmlessness is carried to so ridiculous an extreme that it is positively touching.

Brichanteau is charming because he is always treading the boards, because he believes, in good faith, that his life is a drama in which he plays the principal part. Claretie has described with delightful irony this ridiculous side of the character of his hero, who wears in ordinary life the nodding plumes of the stage. Nothing could be more delightful than the episode in which Brichanteau tells, with the utmost seriousness, how, in 1870, he had formed a plan to kidnap the King of Prussia at Versailles, and how, if this plan, as marvellously constructed as the plot of one of D'Ennery's pieces, had succeeded, France would have been saved.

Brichanteau is altogether artless. He allows himself to be carried away by the sentiments he utters. In his tours through the provinces he takes with him a wreath which is to be presented to him in the last act, as he is leaving

the stage. When it is given to him, he weeps real tears of pride and emotion. He is sincere, for he is an illusionist, or, as we would say now, he is a victim of self-suggestion.

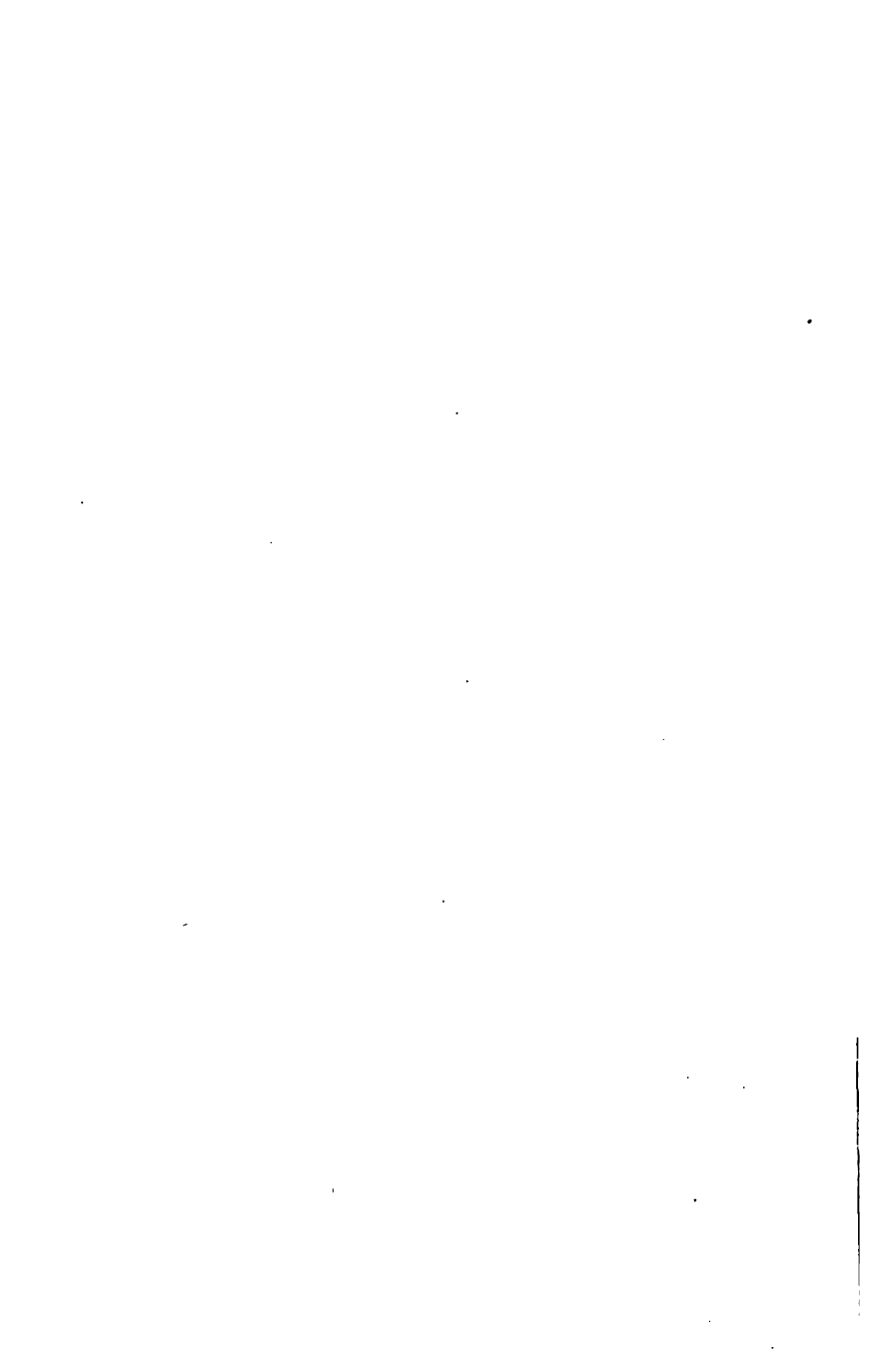
For every circumstance of his life he has words taken from his repertory. He does not say: "I shall require five louis." He thinks of "Hernani" and speaks of five carolus d'or. He goes boating of an evening and thinks of Mordaunt in "The Three Musketeers." If his nose bleeds, he remembers the blood-stained handkerchief which André Roswein, in Octave Feuillet's drama, offers to Dalila. What we call the professional bent is strongly marked in Brichanteau. Wherever he is, whatever he may be doing, he is always on the boards.

But what distinguishes him from many of his congeners is that he is neither disagreeable nor cynical. Brichanteau's fatuousness is always good-humored, and his vanity is always relieved by a deep feeling for art. We can easily forgive him his little oddities because he loves his profession, because he holds it to be the highest of all professions, because he will never be guilty of a meanness which might dim its splendor in the eyes of the Philistines.

Jules Claretie has grasped all the shades of character of his hero, and has rendered them with great delicacy. Brichanteau is a living

person whom we have all known, and who unites in himself a whole generation of actors of a bygone day, who have now disappeared or who are fast disappearing.

The work is written with a sprightly and witty pen. The language is easy to understand, however little familiar one may be with the French of the day. I think, therefore, that the book will be appreciated among you as it has been in Paris. I do not know, in any case, where you could find more curious and exact information regarding the spiritual state of the exceptional being whom we call the actor when he succeeds in his profession, and the strolling player when he struggles against evil fortune or when he is overwhelmed by it. — FRANCISQUE SARCEY, *Staff Contributor to Arts and Letters Department, in the Cosmopolitan Magazine.*



BRICHANTEAU.

I.

THE MODEL.

BEFORE the statue of *The Roman Soldier Humiliated Under the Gallic Yoke*, Brichanteau stood for a long time, his felt hat over one ear, his hands in his pockets, contemplating that work of art with the air of a connoisseur, indulgent and almost tender; while I, glancing from the statue to the actor, traced a vague resemblance between the carven features and those of Sébastien Brichanteau, interpreter of leading rôles in various theatres in France and in foreign lands.

The statue stood in an obscure corner of the Garden of Sculpture, at the Salon, near the kitchens of some refreshment-rooms, or the ash-heap of some engine, — one of those corners where no one passes, the works of art being left exposed to a lamentable sort of neglect. There the smiling statues take on a melancholy air, and the sorrowful plaster-casts assume even more lugubrious attitudes. The con-

quered Roman, with his number pasted on the pedestal, 3773, and the ox-yoke on his neck, bowed his head with more bitterness in that solitude, where, perhaps, Brichanteau and I alone had disturbed him since Varnishing Day. A manly figure, moreover, with a gloomy, sorrowful expression, a frown on his brow, a trifle theatrical, but painful to see, the statue angrily bent its broad shoulders, and the muscles of its arms seemed to grow harder in the effort to break the bonds which rudely cut its wrists.

"That Roman resembles you, Monsieur Brichanteau!" I said to him.

The great man bowed, with a beautiful gesture, respectful and solemn, like Ruy Blas presenting the King's letter to the Queen of Spain; then, with his usual pomposity, tempered on this occasion by an emotion voluntarily dissembled, he said,—

"There is nothing astonishing in that, monsieur! This warrior, this vanquished one, why, it was I who posed for him! Yes, I!—I am sometimes a model in my leisure hours. I do not think that I have the right to refuse to art the external gifts that nature has bestowed so bountifully upon me, if I do say it. Art never varies: my intelligence, then, is at the service of the poets in their interpretation; and my body always ready to guide the inspiration of painters and sculptors. Hugo would go into bankruptcy if I did not devote all my brain-power to him, and

contemporaneous plastic art if I were sparing of my fine presence. Those are sentiments you will understand !

“ And so I posed for this Roman ! This Roman, who embodies the grief of a nation, is myself, all myself ! Monsieur, you may believe me or not, as you choose, but I intended to put into my pose the soul of a whole people. I said to Montescure — that is the sculptor’s name, his signature is there under the left foot — I said to him : ‘ Montescure, notice the curl of my lip. Does it not express all the bitterness of defeat ? If it does not, I will make it do so.’ It is true, monsieur, I am a patriot ; it was foolish, perhaps, but in ’70 I did my best to escape the embrace of the foreigner. It was only by chance — that arbiter of the destiny of nations — that I did not change contemporaneous history, and I retain memories of that time which I will call sadly glorious or gloriously sad, as you prefer. Briefly, monsieur, I tried to express all this in the curl of my lip. Again I asked : ‘ Is it there ?’ and Montescure replied, coughing as he spoke : ‘ It is there, Brichanteau ; do not tire yourself, or it will turn to a grimace !’ I had not much time to tire myself, there were so many interruptions during the sittings. Poor fellow ! He was sometimes taken with such fits of coughing that he would sit down and bend over double on his chair. Thereupon I would rise, bring him a glass of water,

or make him a *tisane*; and when I resumed my pose, you understand, there was nothing affected about the curl of my lip then, nothing at all, and I had not much difficulty in representing the bitterness of defeat.

“Montescure was very particular about that bitterness. It was the idea of his *face*. He never began on a statue without a fixed idea. I am of the same school myself. He wanted to express all the impotent rage of the vanquished, exactly as I do myself, when I say to Henri III.: ‘I defy you still, Sire, although you hold me, disarmed, and foaming at the mouth, under your iron heel!’ He was a noble youth, that Montescure. A brave heart! — and talent! ah! such talent! You have only to look at this statue! I believed that it was difficult to interpret all the mute eloquence of my pose; you see, monsieur, he did interpret it!

“How did I come to know Montescure? Oh! it is quite a long story. Let us sit down here; I will tell you. Poor Montescure! On this bench where we sit, I have seen many people sitting since the Opening. No one looks at poor Montescure’s *Vanquished Roman*. High art has no chance to-day. And yet God only knows the hopes Montescure built upon that figure! An order, a medal, a place at the Luxembourg, in the Museum or in the garden. Ah! his brain kept going and going and became inflamed. He had, moreover, a constant fever. I looked at

him as he worked, and I could not refrain from saying to him: 'Dear young master, take care! The blade wears away the scabbard as time wears away grief.' He replied: 'Ah! nonsense! Let us keep pegging away!'

"He was a child of the South, but not vigorous and rugged like most of the people of that country; no, a half-Toulousan, thin as a Paris *gamin*, but very courageous, on my word, and very poor. He began his career as a member of the orchestra at the Théâtre du Capitole; then he came to Paris, and, even in the studio, he played the horn while moulding the clay. He has often told me about it. Playing the horn! A villanous calling, you say? All callings are honorable, monsieur, when art is their goal. There are people who are passionately fond of the horn. At the Conservatory there's a teacher of the horn who has grown old after doing nothing but that all his life, — playing the horn and teaching others to play. Statues have been erected to less heroic men. Well, Montescure, before he entered the Chavanat studio, had graduated from that hero's class, and with highest honors. Highest honors for playing the horn! That triumph did him little good, however. He could put on his card, *Prize-winner at the Conservatory*, and could offer his services to play at wine-shops and weddings. Artists, monsieur, endure sufferings that the common herd will never understand.

"In Montescure's case, however, the horn was simply a means of livelihood ; his object in life was sculpture, — to leave a name graven in marble or bronze, or even in terra-cotta ; a laudable ambition, I confess, monsieur, and worthy of a proud heart. Montescure had said to himself that the horn — his horn — would furnish food for his mind. Pardon the juxtaposition of words — which vaguely resembles a pun,¹ a literary foible which I detest, as I do operettas and farces, the enemies of art. And Montescure, who worked at his sculpture during the day, played in the evening in the orchestra at the Théâtre de Montmartre, where the stringency of the time had compelled me to accept an engagement, yes, myself, Brichanteau !

"A temporary engagement, however, and not wholly without benefit to my talents. There, with my eye upon an entirely unique and often very thinly scattered audience, I was able to feel the artistic pulse of the people of the outskirts of Paris. Monsieur, those people still love the drama ! When I appeared in *Marceau*, a patriotic thrill — I could feel it — ran through those enthusiastic plebeian stalls. I consented, one Sunday, at the earnest request of a young actress of much promise, whose earnestness

¹ The reference is to the use of the word *cor* (horn) which somewhat resembles *cœur* (heart), in close proximity to the word *âme*, sometimes used in the sense of "heart."

moved me more than her beauty, although that was disturbing to one's peace of mind — I consented, I say, to play Ruy Blas, at the last moment. Monsieur, they nearly carried me in triumph, and the director of the theatre at Nantes, who had come expressly to hear Mademoiselle Pascali — her name was Pascali, Léa Pascali — said to me after the performance: 'I came to see Mademoiselle Pascali, because I need a *jeune première*; but you have impressed me, you only! I profoundly regret that you are not a *jeune première*.' That compliment flattered me, though decidedly original. It displeased Léa, I ought to say, and was the cause of a rupture which I might myself otherwise have provoked, for I felt that that woman held a place in my life that art alone should hold. But let us pass on.

"I played, then, at the Théâtre de Montmartre. And when I appeared, above the tremolo of the orchestra, I had often been struck by a note, at the same time plaintive and vigorous, that accompanied my entrance, — the note of a horn, melancholy and powerful, —

'Oh, how sad is the sound of the horn in the depths of the woods!'

and in the depths of the orchestra also.

"Instinctively I looked down — although I detest music, the art of pure sensations; inferior to poetry,

which lives on thought. I looked at the musician who played the horn. He was a very young man, pale, thin, sickly, whose emaciated face became purple when he blew into his horn with his weak lungs; often I have heard him cough and cough; and one evening, during the act in *La Tour de Nesle*, where I say to Marguerite de Bourgogne: 'Queen, where are your guards? When a man and woman stand face to face, when the man commands and the woman trembles, it is the man who is king!' — at that moment the musician was taken with a fit of coughing — oh! such a dreadful fit of coughing. Confusion, cries, protestations! 'Take him out!' 'Silence!' 'Give him some jujube!' 'They want a doctor!' As for me, I still held Marguerite de Bourgogne terrified and shivering under the stern, twofold menace of my gesture and my glance; and as the poor fellow's coughing continued in deplorable fashion, a cry came down from the upper galleries, like a sharp sword, and struck the unfortunate fellow full in the breast: 'Get out of the orchestra, *sirop de cadavre!*'

"Monsieur, the spontaneous homage of a crowd touches me as keenly as its cruelty tortures me. There was in the hall, at the sally of that Chamfort of the gallery of the gods — if I may so express myself — there was, I say, such a burst of laughter that I was filled with pity to the bottom of my soul; and I was angry too,

the more angry because Madame Nathan, who was playing the rôle of Marguerite de Bourgogne, and who, moreover, was one of those women who look upon the stage much less as a place consecrated to art than as a pedestal for their beauty, — because Madame Nathan burst out laughing! yes, she, Marguerite, Queen of France, who should have remained overwhelmed and petrified beneath my gaze.

“A most distressing episode, monsieur, in a long artistic career! The unfortunate musician — it was Montescure — rose abruptly under the lash of this buffoonery; he passed quickly through the orchestra, knocking down the bass viol in his haste, and nearly sending the instrument out of the first and only violin’s hands, and disappeared rapidly through the little door used by the musicians, as Mordaunt vanishes through the wall before the sword of D’Artagnan. But swift as was his flight, my eye, accustomed to take in every detail of a theatre, whether filled or empty, saw upon the young man’s emaciated face one of those desperate expressions which art sometimes abandons the attempt to reproduce, and at the instant he disappeared I saw him hastily put his handkerchief to his eyes and then to his mouth, and the linen was instantly soiled with a crimson stain, which — need I tell you! — was the stain of blood!

“*Sirof de cadavre!* The jest rang cruelly in my

ears again and again as I finished the scene ; and the thoughts of Buridan were for some moments very far from Marguerite de Bourgogne. I thought of the musician, and the fascination of art could not tear me entirely from a recollection of the sad reality, — a handkerchief stained with blood, like the one that André Roswein — one of my best rôles — presents to Dalila. I divined that sad, sombre reality. My act finished, I went to my dressing-room, and on the staircase I met, I almost stumbled against the musician, who was waiting for me, still holding his blood-stained handkerchief to his mouth.

“ He was trembling all over.

“ ‘ Ah ! Monsieur Brichanteau, I am in despair, in despair ! My God, how grieved I am ! ’

“ ‘ Why so, my young friend ? ’

“ ‘ Why — this cough — the scandal — the way I left the orchestra.’

“ I had compassion inwardly for this timidity, which was a sort of unconscious homage.

“ ‘ My young friend,’ I said to console him, ‘ take courage ; I have seen many others ! I have sometimes defied popular tempests, and the *claque* has more than once bombarded me with green apples, those vegetable bombshells which the soldiers of art defy. One interruption more or less matters little. Especially as I was called before the curtain as usual after the tableau, as you saw. Oh ! no, you did not

see it, you had gone out. And it was a very cordial recall, altogether cordial ! ’

“ He stood against the wall, pale and melancholy. I invited him to walk into my dressing-room. And I made my invitation the more urgent because we were in a draught, and my voice, which is very powerful, as you hear it, but very sensitive, dreads hoarseness. Once in the room I begged him to take a chair. Thereupon, twirling his felt hat between his fingers, he told me his story, as I have told it to you : his departure from Garigat-sur-Garonne, near Toulouse, his double vocation of musician and sculptor, or rather his desire to nourish his dream of art, sculpture, by following his profession of playing the horn — which became the *cornêt-à-piston* in the orchestra ; and while speaking, he looked at me so fixedly that I turned and looked in my mirror, to see if I had made up my face badly. Not in the least ! Superbly painted ! It was simply because I was so admirably made up that he gazed at me so.

“ ‘ You think that I have the right idea of Buridan, do you not ? ’ I asked. ‘ Do I resemble him ? ’

“ I meant by that, monsieur, that I resembled the ideal type that people generally conceive of the man. The ideal, you understand ; I strive for the ideal !

“ He replied, ‘ I think, Monsieur Brichanteau, that you have the air of a Roman. ’

“ Buridan was a Burgundian, and I had the air of

a Roman! It is true, I have the air of a Roman. When I played tragedy at Montpellier, the prefect said to me one evening: 'Monsieur Brichanteau, you resemble a medallion!' Montescure, the obscure musician, was of the same opinion as the prefect. I had the air of a Roman, and, moreover, the air of a particular Roman, for whom he was searching as we artists search for types. All the arts are brothers!

" 'Ah! Monsieur Brichanteau,' he said to me, 'if I only had you before me, to pose for my statue — a model like you!'

" 'A model?'

"He had touched a sensitive chord. I was very young when M. Ingres, the late M. Ingres, chose me to serve as a model for one of the figures in his famous *Saint Symphorien*. The late M. Ingres had also recognized the antique cast of my features. He called me Talma the younger, Talma II. That is why, more than once in the course of my existence, I have consented to make my physical gifts nourish my intellectual gifts. I knew M. Delaroche, M. Léon Cogniet. My profile figures in three different works, in the Museum at Versailles: as a Crusader, as a gentleman of the time of François I., and as a volunteer. You would recognize me, with or without the mustache. But, for many years, I had not posed. The stage was my all-in-all, nothing but the stage with all its chances and hardships.

“Meanwhile poor Montescure was telling me his plans. He had hit upon an idea which he thought a good one. He had shown his sketch to Monsieur Falguière, who approved of it. He proposed, as I have told you, to delineate in a *Roman under the Yoke* all the bitterness of defeat—my thought, my own thought once more.

“But no money to pay the model, not a sou to bring the statue to completion.

“‘Oh! well,’ I said to Montescure, ‘I will pose for you, for your Roman; I will make two parts of my life as you do: one for the drama, the other for the sculptor. When shall I come to your studio?’

“Ah! it was a fine place, that studio of his! Poor devil! A sort of hen-coop, made of boards, at the end of a garden on the back side of the hill of Montmartre. A mere hovel, where the poor fellow, in the last stages of consumption, with holes as big as that in his lungs, must have been numb with cold while he worked. The light came in from above through a window from which the glass was missing, being replaced by pieces of newspaper pasted over the holes. But in that hovel there were sketches, studies, models, which were real masterpieces. Remarkable pieces of work, if you think the word ‘masterpiece’ too strong; little things done in an idle moment, but very pretty in conception, and original. And there, above all, was this Roman, the future

number 3773, blocked out but well under way, bent like an ox and with his head on one side, his brow as threatening as that of a bull in the ring.

“On my word, when I saw the poor fellow, so thin and pale, harnessed to that powerful figure, I fell in love with the work. I said to myself: ‘He shall finish this statue of his; I will be the inspiration of this musician who moulds clay, I will be his co-worker, I will be his model!’ And I kept my word! Between two rehearsals I went to the studio—the studio, what mockery!—and having been, the night before, Hernani, or Montéclain in *La Closerie des Genêts*, I became in the morning Montescure’s Roman, a Roman bent like the painter Gleyre’s, a Roman vanquished but threatening, such as I had been in 1871, in prison at Versailles, when I came so near kidnapping, yes, taking prisoner the King of Prussia,—I will tell you about that. For Montescure’s sake I fawned on the manager of the Odéon, a former comrade of mine, in order to obtain a cuirass and parts of the costume of Horace. I obtained those properties, and I, who was competent and perhaps ought to have acted in tragedy at the Comédie-Française, I, the Talma II. of the late Monsieur Ingres, represented a vanquished centurion in the frigid studio of a poor little obscure sculptor on the back side of the hill of Montmartre! Admirable symbolism, by the way: the Caudine Forks, an

image of my life, — Caudine Forks that have availed to sadden but not to subdue me!¹

“And poor Montescure was mad with joy because he had his model. And the poor little fellow worked and worked!

“‘Don’t kill yourself, Montescure,’ I would say to him. ‘No fever! Control your work. Diderot’s paradox is false; the artist should put his whole heart, his whole being into his game, but only up to a certain point. He ought to spit out his genius in the face of his century, but not his lungs. Don’t kill yourself, Montescure!’

“That was very easy for me to say. But he, the inspired, was in a hurry to finish his work. He felt his life slipping away like the too wet clay between his thin fingers. He often said to me, —

“‘If I could only live till the Salon!’

“‘Are you crazy?’ I asked. ‘You will bury me, Montescure, and I have such muscles. Do you want to do me a favor? You must carve my bust, to be placed on my tomb: *Sébastien Brichanteau, Comédien français!*’

“He laughed. I added: —

“‘I would like to be immortalized by a great sculptor, as Talma has been by David d’Angers. I shall be by you!’

¹ The *Caudine Forks* was the name of a famous defile near Caudium in Samnium, where the Roman army was compelled by the Samnites to pass under the yoke.

“ And he was happy, so happy, burning brighter like a lamp ; brave, almost strong, was poor Montescure. I suggested to him, monsieur, that he should have faith in himself.

“ Ah ! All that winter, that long winter, it was not cheerful for the author of the *Roman passing under the Yoke*. Montescure hammered away in his ice-house, like a Belgian overseer in his mine, and the perspiration sometimes poured off his thin body, and over his forehead, where on either side, I could have put three fingers in the holes. Then there were the evenings at the theatre that were wearing out his lungs and killing him ! I cudgelled my brains to find a way to keep him from going to the orchestra, from returning home at night in the snow and the fog. To say nothing of the prowlers on the hill ! I often went with him to his lodging, giving him my arm and returning home at once, reciting poetry. My robust health had become attached to his weakness.

“ I was not his model only — and many a time have I risked a cold and influenza in that infernal studio. I was also his adviser. For had not poor Montescure fallen in love with our *ingénue* ? He saw her only as she appeared to him behind the footlights, fair and red-cheeked and sweet, and he talked of nothing less than marrying her if she would consent.

“ ‘ My boy,’ I said to him, ‘ the artist who puts his

foot in an actress's slipper is lost. I know the women! They are most seductive creatures; but have you ever watched their smiles, studied their voices? Stagey! stagey, I tell you! What an artist needs is a devoted companion, and what's more, a woman who will be the pot to which you put ears!'

"Montescure did not reply; he heaved a sigh and said:—

"'Mademoiselle Martinet is very pretty all the same! I mean to make a statuette of her: *Palm Sunday*.'

"'Oh! *Palm Sunday*, as much as you please! If she inspires you, so much the better! But as to marrying her —'

"Thereupon he shook his head, sighed, laughed at his own hopes. *Palm Sunday!* Before even thinking of the new work, would he have time to finish the *Roman*, which had given me so many cricks in my neck? For I need not tell you, I posed conscientiously, as I act. Model or actor, my devotion is the same.

"And the Roman progressed slowly, very slowly; the poor little fellow's strength was failing. Sculpture is a strong man's art. I succeeded in inducing him to give up playing in the orchestra at Montmartre. He could retire earlier and not excite himself by gazing, as from the foot of an altar, at the fair hair of Mademoiselle Martinet, the *ingénue*, who made fun of

him in the wings, and said that he played tunes in which his cornet *made eyes at her*. I had assured him that our manager would keep his place for him, and that no substitute should succeed him. At last he allowed himself to be persuaded.

“ ‘ But how shall I live, Brichanteau ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Are you not living now ? ’ ”

“ ‘ How can I pay you for your sittings ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Are you mad ? Was it not understood that this was not to be spoken of between us ? ’ ”

“ ‘ But the stove ! the stove eats up charcoal. ’ ”

“ ‘ Oh ! well, let it eat it. Charcoal does not cost much. They have just discovered some new coal-mines, very rich. Coke is getting to be a drug in the market. They are giving away coke. ’ ”

“ It was not really being given away, but the price asked for it was not ruinous. I thought of starting a subscription at the theatre, of putting up one of Montescuré's statues to be raffled : *A raffle for the benefit of a very interesting artist !* But his was a lofty soul, very sensitive. He would have felt hurt. I abandoned that scheme, to which we often resort among ourselves, and which has served to alleviate so much suffering. There was also the extra performance : *Matinée for the benefit of an unnamed artist !* ”

“ I would willingly have again played Tyrrel in *Les Enfants d'Édouard* on such an occasion. Tyrrel is one of my triumphs ! But it was a bad season.

Indeed we had not paid expenses ! Anything is possible. And then, it would have been proper, perhaps, to consult Montescure, and he would have refused, even with the understanding that it was to be anonymous.

“ Faith, so much the worse for me ; I took it all on myself ; that is, I myself carried in a basket or in my pockets the coke that warmed the miserable little studio. I often took him various nourishing articles of food also, which I told him I had received from the South, anonymous gifts — always anonymous — from unknown admirers. I did not say unknown female admirers, in order not to evoke the image of Mademoiselle Martinet. On those days I breakfasted beforehand, and ate little with Montescure, and I left with him all that remained, saying : —

“ ‘ That ’s for you ! I am not hungry ! ’

“ It was as good a way as any other of supplying his larder. And in order to do it, I did extra work ; I gave lessons to a young Moldavian prince, a stammerer, who was destined for the Conservatory, and who found that I knew the repertory better than they did on Faubourg Poissonnière. Wherein he was right.

“ In a word, I was to the sculptor that winter what — how shall I say it ? — that negro, I have forgotten his name, was to the Portuguese poet. I, too, I assure you, would have begged for that other Camoens, the Camoens of sculpture. Especially as

beggars often have a noble bearing. Witness Callot ! If I had asked alms for Montescure, dressed in the rays of Don César de Bazan, my purse would have been filled with *carolus d'or*.

"I had no *carolus d'or*. But my few sous were enough to keep the life in the little Toulousan, whose cough made me ill. And the days passed, the statue progressed. The *Roman* lived, he became savage, superb. I continued to express and Montescure strove frantically to reproduce the bitterness of defeat. Oh ! it is there ! Look carefully, the bitterness is there ! And the buds swelled on the trees. It was less cold on the hill. *March passed, then April* —

" 'Well ! well !' Montescure exclaimed, 'I feel now that I shall live till Varnishing Day !'

"And he was cheerful and happy. He scarcely coughed at all.

"When the clay model was finished, money was lacking for plaster and rough-hewers ; I believe I sold a few clothes, and one or two old books : *Polyeucte*, with a dedication by Monsieur Samson : *To the young and already great pupil of Monsieur Beauvallet*. But I regretted nothing. The statue, when it appeared as you see it, repaid me for all my trouble.

"Montescure embraced me and said : —

" 'Ah ! Brichanteau, if I make a hit, it is to you, dear, devoted friend, that I owe it !'

“He was at the end of his strength, literally at the end; and the same day that the *Roman* was taken from the poor studio on the hill to the Champs-Élysées, to be passed upon by the jury, he took to his bed. He fell, crushed with his efforts, unable to do more. I can see him now, his eyes following the plaster statue which he had kissed, as if he were saying to himself: ‘But suppose I should never see it again!’ I looked at his pale, hollow cheeks, his eyes sunken as if in deep holes, his long hair, his sparse red beard. He made me think of an emaciated saint — a spectral monk, and with it all he was in a high fever; consumed with anxiety, he said to me, in a hoarse voice, between two fits of coughing: —

“‘If my figure is only received! Yes, but suppose it should be rejected, Brichanteau!’

“‘What do you mean? — a masterpiece!’

“‘Do you think so, really? It is good, you think it is good!’

“‘It is more than good, it is startling, tragic. It is as fine as anything of Père Rude’s. Even if the *Roman* were not modelled after me I should think him admirable!’

“That seemed to comfort him, and he was a little quieter in his bed, for he had remained in bed, prostrated. He was paying for his hard work during the winter. And in the drawers of his wretched commode, not a sou for cough syrup, for a doctor. But

the doctor did not cost much. He was an habitué of the theatre, an intern at the hospital, who also dabbled in literature.

“He had attended me one evening, when, in *Le Bossu*, that animal of a Dorbigny, who is very awkward, had wounded me with a rapier thrust; and we had become friends. Montescure's story, which I had told him, interested him, and he brought to the sick man's bedside the succor of science, as I had brought that of art. For I read and recited poetry to Montescure, in order to calm him, and even, I confess without shame, to put him to sleep.

“A kind-hearted physician was my friend the intern, but he had no hope of curing Montescure.

“‘He is a used-up man, finished! — ill from want, and *ph—th*, as our predecessors used to say, before the new orthography.’

“The saddest part of it all, monsieur, was that the poor fellow was going to die before he knew that his Roman, our Roman was a success — before knowing, even, whether the statue was received. He passed away in my arms one morning weak as an infant, and his head fell back against my shoulder. He whispered: ‘Thanks! thanks!’ His hands strove to press my strong fingers. I heard him also repeat a word, which is the great mirage that leads us all on, — ‘Glory!’

“Ah! yes, glory! The evil-minded have the

money, which makes the noise ; the innocent have the thorns.

"There were six of us who followed Montescure's coffin : the doctor, two musicians from the orchestra, Barigel, our stage-manager, and the portress of the little hen-coop where the sculptor died.

"I had tried to persuade Mademoiselle Martinet to come. She had something else to do. And then, as she said : 'Do I know your musician?' It would have pleased him, however, — up yonder — poor fellow. *Palm Sunday!* One of his dreams. No relations. The little Toulousan in Paris was like a stone dropped in the sea ! When I returned to his room after leaving him underground, on a most beautiful day in April, an April that seemed to laugh at us, really, the portress found an official envelope addressed to Montescure. It was the notice of the acceptance of the *Vanquished Roman!* They placed the Roman here, in a wretched light and on Varnishing Day no one saw him. But henceforth — "

At that moment Brichanteau interrupted himself.

"Excuse me !" he said.

A huge wreath of artificial flowers, violets, a wreath about which was entwined a tricolored ribbon with a broad band of crêpe, appeared on the scene, carried by a messenger under the guidance of an attendant.

And Sébastien Brichanteau, throwing back his mas-

sive head, with its long mane-like locks, exclaimed with a proud, triumphant gesture : —

“There is something that will at least arrest the steps and the glances of the vulgar herd, and will say : ‘Here are a masterpiece and an emblem of mourning. Look ! ’ ”

Brichanteau himself, hesitating no longer, had taken up a collection at the theatre to purchase the wreath, and with pious devotion caused it to be laid there on the pedestal of No. 3773.

Some curious spectators came up while Brichanteau was arranging the ribbon and the crêpe. A number of loungers hurried to the spot.

“Poor Montescure ! ” said the actor, shaking his head ; “his receipts are just coming in ! ”

Then, stepping back a little, in order to judge the effect of the wreath, like a manager on a poet’s birthday when a wreath is placed on the poet’s bust, —

“It needs a palm,” said Brichanteau. “It shall be there to-morrow ! ”

Then, drawing near to me, he whispered softly in my ear : —

“Better than that. It seems that there is much excitement at the Beaux-Arts over Montescure’s death. The State must purchase his statue and have it cast in bronze. There are no two ways about it. It must be done. The Roman must be sent into the provinces, and he will appear, standing, an awe-inspiring

figure, amid the verdure of some public square. Poor Montescure ! He will not have carved my bust, no ; but he will have made all human griefs and protests incarnate in my person ; it is I, they are my features, which he will have handed down to posterity, and if, as I dare not hope, life affords me a recompense, and permits me by some unforeseen creation to assert my artistic personality, then, not in the show-windows of fashionable photographers must my fleeting image be sought ; thank God ! no, — I have now the most sovereign contempt for that Pantheon of the street, where the dancers at public balls pose side by side with the less contestable celebrities of our country, — no, in the open air, among the trees, in the sunlight, shall be found, maltreated by time and with the proud lineaments of a Roman soldier, Sébastien Brichanteau, that soldier of art who had the honor of sharing his bread with Claude-André Montescure, — born at Garigat, near Toulouse, (Haute-Garonne), graduate of the École des Beaux-Arts at Toulouse, ‘No. 3773,’ see Catalogue ! — And who knows ? To have served as a model for that poor fellow will, perhaps, prove my best rôle ! That wreath looks well ! — as all last wreaths do ! ”

Then Brichanteau left me for a moment.

He had noticed, near a neighboring statue, a man of robust aspect, with a florid face, a dingy gray beard, and eye-glasses perched on his short nose,

who stood looking at the statues as near-sighted persons look at paintings, at very close range; so that one longs to say, as Rembrandt did when any one approached too near his canvases: "Stand back; that smells bad!"

"The deputy-mayor of Garigat-sur-Garonne," said Brichanteau, hastily. "I will be at your service in a moment, monsieur!"

He had carried his hand — a slender, beautiful hand, made to handle the brush or the rapier — with a noble gesture to his broad-brimmed brown felt hat, which gave him the air of a guardsman, and in three steps he was beside the man with the gray beard, whom he accosted with an amiable but very dignified air, — a proud and well-bred manner of presenting himself, like D'Artagnan saluting the queen when he returned her diamonds.

And I watched him while he talked, very erect, very animated, gesticulating freely and gracefully, — the excellent actor of an earlier time, who was in my eyes the incarnation of more than one generation of artists, with their feverish ambitions, their hopes, their devotion, — this Sébastien Brichanteau, a poor waif of art tossed about by every wave like the hulk of a packet-boat after a storm, the worthy man who had, at twenty years, dreamed of glory and fortune, the two poles of Chimera, and who, at sixty, with artless kindness of heart and the devoted

affection of an elder brother, took from his own mouth the crumbs of bitter bread filled with gravel that his destiny grudgingly left him, to give them to a companion in distress less robust than he.

He had interested me with his history of Montescure ; I divined in him a vast fund of reminiscences. He had seen so much, the poor strolling player, so very much, in his rough journeys ! And life had left him as good as he was handsome. Tall, with head erect, deep-chested, he had rather the air of a Gaul defying the fall from heaven, than of a Roman passing under the yoke, had this sexagenarian, whose long, black hair, and heavy, drooping mustaches, with here and there a stray silver thread, old age had respected. With his beautiful dreamy blue eye, a little sad, yet sometimes flashing fire, which was easily kindled beneath those bushy eyebrows, and despite his rather full cheeks, and slightly flaccid neck which he held as straight as if he were going to the scaffold, one would have called him fifty, or forty-five, *if necessary*, as they say on the stage. He seemed cut from the very heart of the oak.

"I resemble Flaubert !" he would often say to me in our future conversations. He was right. He was a giant of that temper. Montescure, in making him so handsome, had simply made him as he was.

He came back to the bench where I had re-

mained seated, after three minutes' conversation with his Southerner, from whom he had parted with a dignified grasp of the hand; he came toward me radiant, the light of joy beaming in his eyes.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but it is Montescure again for whom I have been working. Yes, that is M. Cazenave, the deputy-mayor of Garigat-sur-Garonne; I knew him at Toulouse. He is something of a poet is Cazenave, a poet in the raw, and I have recited his verses. Some of them are very patriotic. Service for service. Seeing him, a thought passed through my brain like a flash of lightning. When I say that Montescure was from Toulouse, I mean that he was born near there, at Garigat-sur-Garonne. Well! this is my idea. It is sublime. If the State makes a wry face or has not the money, the Municipal Council of Garigat-sur-Garonne must buy the *Roman Passing under the Yoke!* Yes, yes, I will stand or fall by that! I have sown the seed. It will germinate. Cazenave did not say no. The souls of poets and actors are sisters. Cazenave will help me, and I swear to God, yes, on my life I swear that reparation shall be made the poor devil whose masterpiece is so wretchedly placed."

Then, addressing the statue of the *Vanquished Roman*, Sébastien Brichanteau — magnificent to behold, with his impetuous gesture — in an apostrophe that would have drawn a crowd to any other

part of the garden than that deserted corner, swore a mighty oath, as if upon the manes of the vanquished sculptor, that Montescure's statue should be placed in the museum of Garigat-sur-Garonne ; and, if his native town had no museum, in the bright sunlight of the Forum, before the eyes of all passers-by, exposed to the gaze of curious tourists and to the admiration of the passing crowd.

"Yes, Montescure, your work shall be described in the Guides Joanne, your old friend Brichanteau gives you his word. I can see you now, to employ your time while your model is resting, poor fellow, take up your cornet and blow till your lungs give out, rehearsing the tunes you are to play in the evening at the theatre ! How many times I have snatched your instrument of death from your hands ! You, play *tremolos* ! — you who were made to people the Luxembourg and the Louvre with your visions in marble ! Montescure, I will keep my oath, and reparation shall be made to you ! Montescure, you shall be avenged !"

He turned to me once more.

"Yes, monsieur, I, who have never been known to bestir myself on my own account, will bestir myself now ! I, who am no schemer, will scheme ! I will give performances at the cafés-concerts, if necessary. I will obtain signatures to petitions, I will pass around subscription lists in the foyers of the theatres.

My comrades are fierce-looking fellows, but they have kind hearts! Even the women who have no hearts know how to find one when they are moved! And when Montescure is famous, it will seem to me that Sébastien Brichanteau, the Talma of an earlier time, has his revenge. I am entitled to that revenge. *Ah! ohimé! ahi! ahi! povero Calpigi!* Monsieur, if you knew what my life has been!"

He asked nothing better than to tell his story, to tell the black beads of his existence, — he, the vanquished one of art, the Roman wearing the yoke of poverty. He longed to pour out his heart — for he had a heart — and, in default of hopes, to prattle of his reminiscences.

I had listened to him on that day by chance; I determined thenceforth to make a business of listening to him; one by one I seized on the wing and jotted down the confidences of that untamed artist, always trustful, always high-minded; and he himself it is, with the original flavor of his words, metaphors, fragments of rôles, scraps of long speeches, tinsel and glitter, *picaresque* and picturesque, — Sébastien Brichanteau himself, French actor, who has been on the rolls of all the theatres in France, — who is about to give free wing to his souvenirs, good and bad, that are still beating their broken wings against their cage.

II.

THE LASSO.

I RECALL even now with sadness the season that I passed at Perpignan. I was engaged to play leading rôles there, and in that out-of-the-way provincial capital, far from the eyes of the Parisian public, — my true public, — I played my parts with as much care, I put as much soul into my work, as if I were creating one of Hugo's dramas before the great critics of Paris. So I shall not astonish you when I tell you that I became the idol of the people of the Pyrénées-Orientales. I acted successfully in my whole repertory, and I consoled myself with the triumphs of art for my exile on the Spanish frontier.

For Perpignan, the end of the world, was a place of exile to me, ambitious as I was to act at the Porte-Saint-Martin, the Comédie-Française — or, at the worst, the Ambigu. But when one acts where one can, the important thing is to act as well as one can. "If you have not a church to decorate," said Eugène Delacroix (I knew him and posed for him as a Turkish cavalier), "paint a fresco in the first public square you come to!" I said to myself that, after all, at Perpignan, as everywhere, there are lovers of art, and

it was for them that I acted. They understood me, they applauded me. I was consoled and strengthened by them.

Moreover, I became popular, and people saluted me when I passed through the streets. I remember that one day as I was leaving the court-room, the first president accosted me in front of the statue of François Arago to congratulate me on the way I had played *Lazare le Pâtre*; and one Sunday, after a performance of *Ruy Blas*, the prefect told me personally that the piece had never been better interpreted in Paris. That sort of thing is consoling.

The press also was favorable to me. It was not numerous, but I had it all with me. It comprehended my efforts, it encouraged them. I was touched. I trouble myself little about the press, and yet I have never been able to refrain from reading the papers to see if the verdicts of the critics accord with my views. Nearly always they do.

One evening, however, during an entr'acte of *Beaux Messieurs de Bois-Doré*, my friend Paturel, a fine fellow, said to me with an expression that astonished me : —

“ Have you read the *Argus* ? ”

The *Argus* was a small paper, political and literary, a vine-growers' paper, too, which championed the interests of the farmers about Perpignan, and possessed a special artistic critic, recently come from

Rivesaltes, who was called, with respect, the *Jules Janin of Rivesaltes*. In the provinces Janin, the prince of critics, is not yet forgotten, you see. I have always found, in my provincial tours, an authorized critic who was called, according to the time, sometimes the Janin, sometimes the Sarcey of the town. Somebody would say to me when I arrived: "You must leave your card on Richardin, or Verdinet; he's the Sarcey of the town." Thus there is a Sarcey at Lyon, a Sarcey at Bordeaux, a Sarcey at Lille. Formerly it was a Janin.

I knew the Jules Janin of Rivesaltes from having seen him at the café at Perpignan. He was a good fellow, square-shouldered, with well-rounded paunch, very red-haired and very pale, who held his head proudly erect, — a head with hair that bristled defiantly, although bald in spots, — and wore his mustaches turned up at the ends in the Russian fashion; a bumptious blade who had entered journalism as he had sold wine, and who wrote his article with the prolixity and self-importance of a commercial traveller. It seems that he had at first treated me very handsomely in the *Argus*; then, when he found that I did not manifest sufficient gratitude, and that I evidently failed to appreciate his power, his epithets assumed a different character, and the number of the *Argus* of which my friend Paturel spoke contained an extremely disagreeable article, — an article in which the words

strolling actor were used and applied to me, — to me, Brichanteau, the pupil and rival of Beauvallet !

“What have you done to Baculard, in Heaven's name?” Paturel asked.

“I? Nothing. I have never spoken to him.”

“Then that's the hitch!” my friend replied. “Baculard likes to have homage paid him. You have not done it; you have wounded his self-esteem !”

“My dear Paturel, I have one principle. Criticism is free to judge me, and it is not for the artist to solicit its good-will, or to thank it for its decrees. The Jules Janin of Rivesaltes writes what he thinks : he does his duty, I do mine.”

“Why no, why no !” exclaimed Paturel. “There's a misunderstanding. A hand-shake will make it all right with Baculard !”

“After his article? Impossible. The artist may forget; the man, never !”

I must tell you that the article in the *Argus* was terribly insolent. My fingers fairly itched as I read it. But no ! the fellow was perfectly at liberty, after all, to consider my performance execrable, and, as long as he did not attack my private life, I might be cut to the quick, but I had nothing to say.

However, when on the following day — again in front of the statue of Arago — I met the bulky, insolent fellow, smoking a cigar and talking with a news-

vendor, I made a point of passing directly in front of him, looking him in the eye and not removing my hat. He had seen me coming, and planted himself in my path, his head thrown back, his sly, self-satisfied face already preparing a smile, and I knew well that he was waiting for a touch of the hat and my outstretched hand to say jocosely:—

“Ha! ha! Brichanteau, so we had to come to it, eh?”

I was so sure of his intention that I assumed the pose of Don César staring Don Salluste out of countenance, and stalked haughtily past the stupefied Jules Janin of Rivesaltes. And I was well content. I had seen that puffy face redden slightly, an angry flash had shot from those wicked eyes. The *strolling actor* had his revenge.

A petty revenge beyond question, but there is a satisfaction in staring in the face of the man who insults you and emptying a whole basketful of contempt upon him in a glance. This Baculard, who, like myself, dreamed of Parisian glory, practised down there in the provinces the profession of literary terrorist, which those people are eager to adopt who have neither imagination, the power to charm, the resources of style, nor, in the majority of cases, talent, but who are bent upon attracting attention to themselves and making themselves feared, and who succeed. Humanity is cowardly, monsieur.

When one does not know how to talk, one cries. Baculard howled. He posed as the apostle of high art, while thinking principally of low women. A paladin of the ideal, he advanced sublime theories, and supped with actresses who feared him ; and, at dessert, between two glasses of chartreuse, he proclaimed the ideas to which he had devoted his life, the first of which was to enjoy.

To enjoy everything, — his reputation, which he proposed to establish by a reign of terror ; money, which he proposed to accumulate in large quantities ; love, or what is called love, that is to say, women, whom his lustful nature craved ; ay, even honor, or that which takes its place, — in a word, everything that a bold pen, dipped in a muddy ink-well, can obtain. Of course he dreamed of Paris, of exercising in Paris his talents as a boxer ; for Paris alone bestows reputation, money, and women lavishly. I cannot say what it was that detained the excellent Baculard in the Pyrénées-Orientales. Perhaps he told the truth when he said, laughing his coarse laugh : —

“I am getting my hand in here at Perpignan and Rivesaltes ; this is my fencing-school. But the battleground is Paris. When I have mastered my *thrusts* and *parries*, I shall go there !”

And his plan for making his début in Paris was very simple. Oh ! there was no concealment about

him. He made known his plan to anybody who chose to listen, in the friendly chats at the café.

"I arrive in Paris. I keep my eyes open for an opportunity; I manufacture one if necessary. I spot some prominent, very brilliant personage, who is right in the swim. I attack him. Oh! I strike home! How everything will smoke! Then, what a scandal! A prosecution or a meeting will follow. I am convicted or wounded, it makes little difference, — if I kill my man, so much the better, — and I am in the saddle. Known, feared, fawned upon, after that little hubbub. In a word, success! Let's see, whom can I fall upon first?"

And he would begin to consider.

"Bah! that will depend on the reputations that are in the order of the day when I arrive. This one or that; I snap my fingers at them! Some one who is some one, that's all I want! They can take their choice!"

Meanwhile, the various troupes, comedy and opera, that came to Perpignan trembled before him. Baculard! devil! When any one spoke of Baculard, it seemed as if he had mentioned the Czar of all the Russias. The prima donna turned pale, the *ingénue* shivered, and tears of fright came to the eyes of the *jeune première*. For my part, as I told you, I cared as much for him as for the skin of an apple. And by passing before the statue of Arago without saluting

Baculard, I had certainly made an enemy — an enemy *sterling*, as I say in *Giboyer* — of the Jules Janin of Rivesaltes !

Paturel said to me : —

“Do you know about Baculard? He is foaming at the mouth. Beware of his slaver ! He says cruel things. Cruel words are his specialty. He has hard teeth, and, as they are decayed too, do you think it will be like a caress when he bites? One of these mornings you will awake to find some great slaughtering going on in the *Argus*.”

“Oh, well,” I replied, “the awakening will not keep me from sleeping the following night !”

The slaughter did in fact take place. Oh ! it was tremendous, as Paturel had predicted. Spew your venom, Baculard ! He had spewed it. It was an estimate of my talent in one of the rôles in which I was most successful, — a subordinate rôle, which I rendered, according to universal opinion and my own feeling, almost literary by force of my art and my skill, — Andrès, in the *Pirates of the Savane*.

、The *Argus* accused me of playing it like a fool, like a mountebank unworthy of the Fair at St. Cloud ; like a village stroller, etc., etc., etc., — three columns of amenities of this kind ; a pen-lashing worthy of first prize ; cruel jests by the dozen ; and, by way of conclusion, this appreciative paragraph which I still remember : —

“Monsieur Sébastien Brichanteau is not an actor. With his bull-pricker's or Castilian torero's poses, he seems better fitted for the rôle of *chulo* than for that of dramatic artist, and we can better imagine this buffoon engaged as a *vaquero* in a circus, and throwing the lasso in some Mexican pantomime, than declaiming prose, of whatever character it may be, upon the boards of a theatre. He is a circus-rider; he is not and never will be an actor! Back to your tent, Monsieur Brichanteau, with your big felt hat and your lasso!”

I admit that my first thought, after reading the article, was to go and punch Baculard's head, and tell him what I thought of him to his face. As Saint-Vallier did to the King at Marignan. But, after all, although impertinent, he was but exercising his right of criticism. The artist belongs to the public, to the press, to the man who judges him, to the man who hisses him. I conquered my anger, and I went, like a dutiful soldier, to rehearse according to orders, as if nothing had been said. I arrived at the theatre, putting a bold face on the matter, divining, smelling, catching glimpses of the numbers of the *Argus*, which were hiding in the pockets of my comrades, all of whom were overjoyed.

That day there was a partial rehearsal of *Le Courrier de Lyon*. I played Dubosc, — Dubosc and Lesurques, a double rôle. And during the rehearsal I

vaguely heard Tholozet, the *jeune premier*, humming, evidently to irritate me and remind me of Baculard's *Castilian torero* : —

“Toréador, prends garde!
Toréador, toréador!”

I had a strong desire to thrust the air from *Carmen* down that grasshopper Tholozet's throat, and perhaps I should have done it, but little Jeanne Horly, who was playing the part of my daughter, said to me, from behind a fly, in a low, timid, mournful voice :

“Monsieur Brichanteau, between ourselves he's very wicked, isn't he, that Monsieur Baculard?”

I looked at the poor child. She was leaning against the scenery and looking anxiously into my eyes. Fair, slender, graceful, but very thin, with years of want to redeem, with little hands on which the marks of the needle could still be seen, a little Parisian brought up upon almost nothing, odds and ends of pork and *café au lait* in her mother's attic, but with the sacred fire in her eyes, and a great but painful charm in all her little drudge's body. Still another who was not made for the slavery of the stage!

“Why do you say he is wicked, my dear?” I asked her.

She hesitated.

“You can safely speak; go on!”

"Well, Monsieur Brichanteau, just now some one read an article aloud — that article — that is to say, the article —"

"My article, you mean? The article in which he calls me a buffoon? And what then?"

"What then, Monsieur Brichanteau, what then? Why, the fact is that Monsieur Baculard is paying court to me and I don't like him, and yet I feel that if I send him about his business —"

"He will tear you to pieces, eh?"

"That's it, Monsieur Brichanteau. And Monsieur Carbonier" — he was our manager — "Monsieur Carbonier said to me: —

"'Let Baculard hammer away at Brichanteau, that's all right; Brichanteau's shoulders are broad enough to stand it, Brichanteau has the public on his side; but fix it so that Baculard won't come down on you, for I could n't carry my whole troupe in spite of the *Argus*, if the *Argus* should take hold in earnest. Do you understand?'"

"Carbonier said that?"

"Yes, Monsieur Brichanteau."

"Is Carbonier afraid of Baculard?"

"Yes, Monsieur Brichanteau."

And the little one added: —

"And I am too, Monsieur Brichanteau; I'm afraid of him too! Just think! If Monsieur Carbonier should cancel my engagement, what would become of

me, with my little one out at nurse and mamma a charwoman in Paris?"

I looked again at little Jeanne, Jeanne Horly, a mere child, a *gamine*. So slender! As big round as one's wrist! And she had to pay a nurse for another human creature somewhere about Nevers, — a boy born of the amours of that child with a fellow-pupil at the Conservatory, who had deserted in order to avoid military service, and who was then singing comic songs in Belgian beer-gardens or London music-halls. In receipt of a very moderate stipend at Perpignan, the poor girl saved enough out of her month's wages to send by the post what the Nivernais nurse sharply demanded, and what the mother in Paris needed for her footwarmer and her tobacco. Ah! the pity of it!

And that delicate and pretty, very pretty creature had only one fear, — that the manager, alarmed by the attacks of the Janin of Rivesaltes would dismiss her! Was it possible?

"Don't you be afraid of these scarecrows to frighten sparrows," I said to her, "but send the *Argus* back to Rivesaltes!"

"Ah! Monsieur Brichanteau. That is so easy for you to say! If I only had your talent, your position!"

Poor girl! My position! my talent! They were of much service to me, were they not? One must needs have the sacred fire, an artist's soul nailed to

his breastbone, to endure what I endured and to resign one's self to play the *Pirates* or *Lesurques* in the provinces, when in Paris there were associates — But let us not talk about it. I lavished my eloquence on little Jeanne Horly, urging her to snap her fingers at Baculard's attentions as well as at his attacks, and promising to talk with Monsieur Carbonier himself on the subject and to tell him what I thought of his pusillanimity.

“ If Baculard attacks you, have no fear, for I, yes, I will see that you are applauded ! ”

And I left little Jeanne — for it was nearly time for me to go on — in much better spirits, standing in the wings where we had been talking. But what weak creatures women are ! *Frailty, thy name is woman*, says the Bard of Avon. Some days after this interview at rehearsal, I was going back to my lodgings near the ramparts one night after the play, — it was the dead of winter and it had snowed very hard that day, — when, a few yards in front of me, I espied, splashing through the muddy snow, a sadly ironical couple : the corpulent Baculard, with his broad back, strutting along, his head and sallow face proudly erect, and little Jeanne Horly trailing along at his side, hanging to the giant's arm like some little Poucette being carried off by an ogre starving for fresh meat. They were on their way, he and she, to some house of assignation, the heavy

shoes of one and the other's thin little boots sinking into the dirty, melting snow. And there was such an air of bestial triumph in the red-mustached victor's swaggering stride, and such resigned, timid, shivering melancholy in the little one's drooping shoulders and bowed head, that I do not know even yet whether I was more disgusted than grieved at the lamentable sight. *Vive Dieu*, messeigneurs, it was enough to make one weep!

I deliberated for a moment whether I should pass Baculard, and show myself to him, an unexpected apparition, as the cunning witness of his good fortune. But I decided that it would make too much trouble for the poor girl. And what good purpose would it serve? She had yielded. She had been frightened, the little one being hungry, and the foster-father, the Nivernais peasant, thirsty. And, in face of the threats of the *Argus* and the fear of Monsieur Carbonier, she had yielded. She was the victim of that man, who craved reputation, money, and pleasure. Blackmail! That is not paid simply in checks to bearer. There is blackmailing in debauchery, and the woman who trembles pays like the banker who is intimidated.

I returned home that evening more depressed than I had ever been in my days of greatest depression. I said to myself again and again, "Poor little girl! poor little girl!" And I saw once more that ill-

omened group : the slender girl dragged along, clinging to the conqueror's arm. I was more angry with Baculard for making that bargain with the poor girl than for the diatribes he had directed against me. On my word, there is something of Don Quixote in me ; yes, — Don Quixote of La Mancha, — and I am proud of it.

At that moment the date fixed for my benefit was drawing near. It was the hour for the wreath.

Yes, the wreath ! — the wreath of green laurel ! It was what I had always dreamed of, worshipped, striven for in my long artistic career. A crown of thorns sometimes ! I craved the wreath, the triumphal wreath. And often, yes, very often, monsieur, it has cooled my brow.

I was, indeed, so thirsty for glory that I was accustomed, — I confess it to-day, but without remorse, — when I was touring in the provinces, or when I was to have a benefit performance, to make sure of that final proof of public sympathy, that concluding note, that apotheosis of acting, that materialization of success. I do not blush for it. The audience might be absent-minded, might forget. One must be able to think for one's self. And it was that precaution which precipitated the definitive — what shall I say — inevitable collision between Baculard and myself. Yes, inevitable. And this is how it came about. The date of my benefit was at hand, as I have told you.

I was at liberty to choose my own play, to word my announcements as I saw fit. I had therefore agreed to present, expressly for that solemn occasion, an unpublished drama by a young author of the Pyrénées Orientales, who had read his work to me at the Café Arago. The young man interested me. To tell the truth, authors are less interesting than actors. We have our glory for our lives only, whereas they have the immortality of the library. After twenty-five or thirty years of hard work, what is left of us? Wrinkles. They, even though they have gone themselves, leave their books behind them. I ought to say that, were it not for us, their dramatic works would be absolutely dead. The actor alone gives life to the drama: an unpublished drama is like unlighted foot-lights. That is why we are rightly said to *create* rôles. "Create" is the proper word.

I had promised, as I say, to *create* J. J. Puget's *Le Gaucho*, a play in which I had, by the way, a part cut to my measure, a Mélingue of the good old days, — Don Esteban, the Mexican Gaucho. It seemed to me that the first work of a child of the province, a product of the soil, would attract the public much more than a drama already well-known, and I had asked my manager to loan me the costumes worn in the *Pirates*, the famous *Pirates of the Savane* — in which Baculard had insulted me — to costume the *Gaucho*.

"Whatever you want, Brichanteau," said Monsieur Carbonier.

Good, very good, whatever I wanted. It was understood that, as the beneficiary, I was to pay for the gas, the box-openers, the doorkeepers. Young Puget transferred his author's rights to me. Monsieur Carbonier allowed me to advertise *Le Gaucho* well in advance, provided I did not interfere with the sale of seats for counter attractions.

A liberal man in business was Monsieur Carbonier, — a former bailiff, by the way, who had taken to the business of theatrical manager for love of a singer; indeed, he was rather large-hearted, whatever his attitude toward little Jeanne Horly might lead one to think; but he jumped from his arm-chair in his managerial office when I said to him: —

"Well and good, Monsieur Carbonier. But there's the wreath!"

"The wreath! — what wreath?"

"Why, the wreath that is usually presented to me on my tours, in the name of the personnel of the theatre, at the end of my benefit. The *jeune première* generally brings it to me at the end of the *fifth*, and I receive it from her hands in the presence of the audience, which is almost always profoundly, wildly excited!"

Monsieur Carbonier looked at me, compressing his lips and shaking his head.

"A wreath! a wreath! why, a wreath costs a lot of money; the management can't afford to pay for it, and as for the personnel, as you call it, you are well aware, my dear Brichanteau, that your colleagues are not exactly rolling in wealth. And to take from their salaries the price of —"

I abruptly interrupted Monsieur Carbonier, and observed with great dignity: —

"Oh! my dear manager, what are you talking about? And can you think that I would make my poor comrades of the company bear the cost of a demonstration in my honor? I, my dear manager! — never in my life. — This wreath, yes, this wreath to which I aspire, I already have!"

"You have it?"

"I own it. It is part of my wardrobe. Make my colleagues pay for it? — the idea! I always carry it with me, in my trunk; I keep it fresh, and, when I need it, I take it out, dust it, and use it!"

"Oh! all right! — very good!" exclaimed Monsieur Carbonier, reassured.

"Now, my dear manager, you need not worry at all about the arrangements for this little ceremony, which is a very simple affair. Mademoiselle Jeanne Horly will rehearse it once with me and nothing more will be necessary. I don't even ask you to have the stage set; I will not take one of your rehearsal days. We will rehearse it after *Le Gauchon*,

which we will set up and make ready in the morning, leaving the afternoon free for our repertory.

Monsieur Carbonier was enchanted. From the moment that he knew that the wreath would cost him nothing he became a warm advocate of the wreath. He remarked, however, that as Jeanne Horly was now under the protection of the Jules Janin of Rivesaltes, it would seem as if, by seeking my comrade's assistance, I were endeavoring to secure the critic's neutrality.

"You are suggesting a cessation of hostilities," he said.

"I? Not at all, my dear manager. I select the *jeune première*, because it is my custom. The *jeune première* is always the one who salutes me and hands me the wreath. I do not choose the woman, but the position. If that gentleman sees in my action any desire to mollify him or to make advances, he will be greatly mistaken. I follow tradition. Voilà!"

Monsieur Carbonier said nothing more. After all, what mattered it to him whether Baculard was or was not well-disposed toward me? My engagement was near its close. I should soon leave Perpignan. The management was not involved in my benefit. He washed his hands of the affair.

We distributed the parts, learned, rehearsed and acted J. J. Puget's *Le Gaucho* in nine days. More

than one scene a day. And I had some speeches of a hundred and forty lines ! All the lovers of the drama in town had taken tickets.

The ladies of Perpignan — and I was flattered by it — were evidently anxious to see the beneficiary. I was, I must say, — and vanity is not one of my weaknesses, — I was truly remarkable in Esteban, Esteban the Gaucho. There was one scene in which I held, quivering beneath my iron heel, the man who had insulted me in the prologue, Don Pablo Zamoral, and in which I reached, I can fairly say, the height of pathos. All Perpignan shuddered !

I felt that I was in the right mood ; all the more because I saw in front of me, in one of the orchestra chairs, Baculard's pale face, his fierce glance, his sneer ; and it was to the critic of the *Argus* that I seemed to address the epithets which I hurled at Pablo Zamoral : "*Ah ! you have insulted me, señor, but the Gaucho will have his revenge, and the point of my navaja, Don Pablo, will surely find thy heart, if it is still within thy body, and through the open wound despatch thy soul, if soul thou hast, to Satan's dominions !*" Young J. J. Puget had a fine style. Indirect taxes held him in check, absorbed, annihilated him. 'Tis a great pity.

Le Gaucho was a triumph. The author was called for. Everybody applauded. Baculard alone remained

impassive in his chair. The prefect came to congratulate me. The mayor pressed my hand, accompanying the gesture with cordial, flattering words. The moment had come for the presentation of the wreath.

The curtain rose, all my comrades were grouped on the stage, some in Mexican costume, some in ordinary dress. Encompassed by their sympathy, I had before me the enthusiasm of the public, and I felt as if enclosed in a circle of good feeling, of indulgence, or I might better say, of justice. Monsieur, there was a glow at my heart.

I looked at the wreath, my wreath, which I had, again and again, received from the *jeune première*, at Moulins, at Tours, at Nantes, at Nancy, even at Étampes. It was always fresh, well dusted, bright and green, with its ribbon which I had renewed from time to time, the ribbon with the gilt letters: *To Brichanteau, from his friends and admirers!* And little Jeanne Horly, in Mexican costume, — she played Lola, the Cigarette Girl in *Le Gaucho*, — held in her hands that wreath whereon I read with emotion the gilt letters! *His friends and admirers!* Those were two titles which I was well entitled to bestow upon the spectators, whose justice, whose indulgence, if you please, hailed me with loud acclaim.

Thereupon, the whole hall being wrapped in silence, Jeanne Horly, little Jeanne Horly, whose

heart-rending appearance in the snow and mud I forgot at that moment, Jeanne Horly, who was no longer the poor creature hanging on Baculard's arm, but my Muse, the Muse of my hopes and of dramatic art, living Posterity—Jeanne Horly walked toward me and said in her very soft, deeply moved voice :—

“Accept, O master”—I had dictated the speech to her and told her what words to emphasize—“accept this wreath, the worthy reward of your æsthetic efforts! Such wreaths are never, like the wreaths of conquerors in war, stained with the blood of the common people; they are—and it is much better so—wet with the honest tears immortal art has caused to flow!”

She delivered the little speech very well, with much feeling, did little Jeanne Horly; so well that I was deeply moved, the tears of which she spoke came to my eyes, and I wept! I wept tears that did me good. That ceremony, always the same, was, however, always new to me; and I have never been able to go through the scene with dry eyes. Although repeated frequently, yet it was always to me the sweetest and the dearest of surprises. Do you understand me? Every actor will know what I mean. The effect of my tears upon the audience was, however, startling, literally startling. The orchestra stalls rose, handkerchiefs were waved in the boxes, and they shouted : “Vive Brichanteau! Do not go away! Remain

with us ! Brichanteau ! Brichanteau ! ” Such emotion, even on the Spanish frontier, consoles one for many disappointments. Every one has not experienced it, and when, after I had taken the wreath, my wreath, from Jeanne Horly’s hands, my comrades came one by one and embraced me, there was a perfect delirium in the audience. Kisses were wafted to me which I returned with repeated salutations ; it was even suggested that I be carried in triumph. I avoided the ovation, carrying home with me, like a true egoist, the ineffaceable memory of the evening of *Le Gaucho* and my wreath, my dear wreath, which was destined to afford me like emotion many times again.

What a blissful memory ! But there was, as there is in all triumphs, Roman or Pyrenean, there was in my shadow the licensed insulter, the player upon the shrill-toned flute. Baculard was there, Baculard, to whom I, the beneficiary, had sent a complimentary ticket without my card. He was not long in making me pay for my joy. The next morning the first column of the *Argus* contained an article headed *The Gaucho’s Tears*, and I need tell you no more ! Your poor Brichanteau was abused in that article like the meanest clown at a fair. I had played before the public in a wretched comedy, I had wept, at a stated time, before a vulgar wreath which I carried about through the provinces as a necessary property ; I had

rehearsed and pumped up my tears, had held a special rehearsal of my emotion ; I myself, in gelatinous style, had arranged the compliment whose sickish odor I had had the audacity to inhale in public. I was the most brazen-faced strolling player to be met on the highway, where the chariot of the Comic Novel sticks fast in the mud. This Baculard could not understand that we, putting our whole soul into everything we do, can weep in presence of a wreath that we know and recognize, just as Pygmalion can fall in love with the statue he has created ! For that wreath was, in one point of view, my Galatea !

And the article wound up with this shaft : "When the troupe returns, we shall call again for Esteban-Andrès Brichanteau, of the saw-dust ring of the circus, to perform, between two of his clown's pirouettes, those lasso tricks that he knows so well. The lasso ! that is his function, and to tell the truth, it is his only talent. In a travelling circus I promise him a much more profitable benefit than that he received, the beggar of sous, as a pseudo-actor." Ah ! I could restrain myself no longer. That man had insulted me, not only as an actor, but as a beneficiary, that is to say, as a man. I determined to reply to him, to avenge myself ; and an idea took root in my brain, an artistic idea, monsieur, a delicious idea ! I went the next day to the Café Arago, where the Jules Janin of Rivesaltes was usually to be found astonishing

the bourgeois with his paradoxes, and — more like a strolling-player than I, — making a parade of his wit. He was there, surrounded by good people whom he amused, and taking his bitters as he puffed away at a cigar. I approached him slowly, and stopped two steps from the table at which he was seated.

“Monsieur,” I said, “we have a long-standing account to settle. Is it your pleasure that it be settled soon?”

He seemed astonished at first, looked at me with a jeering air, as he raised his insolent face, and let fall, with excellent effect, by the way, a —

“When you desire!”

“Very well! the sooner the better. It has gone on too long. I respect the press, I owe to it the best part of my joys and the greatest part of my pleasant memories. But I brook no insults. You will either declare that your articles are absurd, or you will give me satisfaction!”

He rose, casting an angry glance at me, and the proprietor of the Café, the customers and habitués of the place, gathered about us.

“My articles?” stammered the great braggart, “You dare, you dare —”

“Certainly, I dare. People are too much afraid of you! As for me, I laugh at you! And, if you do not retract what you have written, you must fight me.”

"Oh! as much as you please," he exclaimed, delighted to show the gallery how brave he was.

"We will fight," I rejoined coldly, for I was master of myself as of the universe, "and as I am the insulted party, I have the choice of weapons! And I choose my favorite weapon! — my strolling-player's weapon, Monsieur Baculard; my travelling-circus weapon; my Gaucho weapon! We will fight with the lasso!"

I had enunciated each word — enunciation is a great thing — with studied, contemptuous, stinging moderation. When the word "lasso" fell upon his head, he shook it as if he were under a shower-bath. He made no reply at first, looking about, trying to laugh it off, seeking in the eyes of those around us some signs of reprobation for me, or an assertion of the utter absurdity of my preposterous proposition.

"With the lasso! You are mad! With the lasso!"

"I am not mad. You have insulted me, called me torero, chulo, picador, and God knows what else! I shall fight with the weapon you have ridiculed! — my favorite weapon, monsieur! If I played Harlequin, I would tell you that I would fight with the wooden sword! I play Esteban the Gaucho! I shall fight with the Gaucho's weapon!"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"You're a buffoon!" he said.

Then turning toward the spectators, he continued :

"A lasso ! Do you see this mountebank ? I will give you a lesson — "

"With your pen, perhaps. I propose to give you one with my lasso ! The lasso, you hear, the lasso ! And if you undertake to play cunning, I will haul you out of your chair at some first performance, and drag you on to the stage with the weapon of the Gaucho, the mountebank, and the clown ! *Hasta la vista, señor !*"

And leaving him stupefied, gasping, his usually pale face suffused with blood, I pulled my big felt hat down over my head like a sombrero, and stalked out of the café as I make my exit in *Don César de Bazan*, every one making way for me until I reached the threshold, where, turning once more, I hurled at him, in the tone of a *To horse, messieurs !* a magnificent, *Au lasso !* which echoed through the room like a peal of thunder.

Paris is a great provincial city, but Perpignan is a small one. The episode of the Café Arago was soon generally known. The *Indépendant des Pyrénées-Orientales* spoke of it the same day in veiled words. In the green-room of the theatre, that evening, the boldest of my comrades gave me an ovation, the more prudent ones shunned me ; they were afraid of Baculard. Little Jeanne Horly was weeping. It seems that Baculard had said that *he would have my skin,*

and that I should leave Perpignan with my face pounded to a jelly. I played *Latude* that evening. I made a great hit. But I still pursued my delicious idea, by asking Monsieur Carbonier to announce *Le Gaucho* for the following Sunday. I sent J. J. Puget to second my request. J. J. Puget was a distant cousin of the ~~mayor's~~ brother-in-law, and Monsieur Carbonier was not sorry to show his good-will to a connection of the municipality.

"But," observed the manager, "suppose Baculard hisses you?"

"Before Sunday the question at issue between Baculard and myself will be settled! We shall have fought with the lasso, or he will have backed out."

"*Le Gaucho* it is, then!" said Monsieur Carbonier.

And he advertised it accordingly.

He did not quite realize the gravity of what I asked him to do when I suggested a second performance of *Le Gaucho*. J. J. Puget's lines were not in his mind at the time. At a given moment Esteban the Gaucho says to Don Pablo Zamoral: "*I will use against thee the weapon of the peons and the Gauchos, vile wretch, and I will drag thee to my hacienda, hanging behind my saddle like a strangled jaguar!*" It was that phrase, and a sonorous piece of writing it is, as they would say to-day, that I proposed to deliver in my agreeably guttural voice. Monsieur Carbonier

forgot that phrase; otherwise he would have cut it out, or else he would have asked J. J. Puget to put something in its place. And Puget would have complied for the sake of being acted.

It was Friday. The affair at the Café Arago and the insult I had offered Baculard were the talk of the town. Would we fight? Would n't we fight? Was I in the wrong? Was I in the right? Opinions were divided. Some were in favor of my lasso, others against it. There were *lassoists* and *antilassoists* in Perpignan. The town was as torn by faction as on the day of a municipal election. The *antilassoists* — I say it without personal bias — were in the minority. Generally speaking, they held that the insulted artist's attitude, even to his tears, *the Gaucho's tears*, was decidedly swaggering, and that it was an original idea of the actor to fight Mexican fashion, to carry into real life the fancies of the drama and of literature. In the streets hats were raised to me, not more frequently, but more cordially. The salutations seemed to say, *Bravo!* to me.

I had sent two friends to Baculard: old Touraille, who played the noble fathers and who was once a drummer in the National Guard, and a customs official, a friend of mine and a man of spirit. Baculard replied that the proposition of a duel with lassos was perfectly absurd, and that I ran the risk of being hissed on the street as well as on the stage. Good

for you, my man! I awaited the next number of the *Argus*. It appeared. Under the heading, *Puppet-shows in town*, it contained these lines: —

“An insignificant actor, passing through Perpignan, has given us, before taking his leave, which he ought to have done long ago, a performance of a cheap low vaudeville, in a café which we will not name. We had believed that such vulgar interludes were confined to the class of prestidigitators who can find no halls in which to exercise their talents. The insignificant actor had, as usual, no success.”

It was very weak for a parry. The general opinion was that it was an insignificant performance, insignificant, to use his own word. Touraille said to me, “He is n’t in love with the *lasso*!” And the hat-raising in the street became even more sympathetic.

Sunday came, and Jeanne Horly tremblingly said to me: —

“Are you going to act, Monsieur Brichanteau?”

“Yes, my child.”

“Are you going to play *Le Gaucho*?”

“Yes, dear child.”

“Will you speak of the *lasso*?”

“Necessarily.”

“Ah! how unfortunate!”

She was pale as a ghost.

“Why unfortunate?”

“If *he* should do what *he* says, Monsieur Brichanteau!”

“What does he say, my child?”

“That he will hiss you first, then go on the stage and slap your face!”

“So be it. Then it will be time for the lasso to take a hand. You can tell him that from me, my child.”

I must say, — and I do not mean to make myself out any braver than I am, — I dreaded the hiss, and I was not at all comfortable about the slap. I might strangle my man after I had received it, but then I must receive it first. However many insults one may avenge, it is disagreeable to submit to them. I laid out my plan of campaign; if he hisses, I will retort by some such phrase as this: “*The hissing of the viper is not so effective as the hissing of an honest man's lasso.*” If he comes toward me on the stage, I will seize his right hand or take him by the throat, and then — But whatever might happen I was determined to play *Le Gaucho* and to carry out my plan to the end, my idea of a duel with the lasso, of what Baculard called a low vaudeville performance —

“My resolution had become a statue!”

Where there's a will, there's a way.

Sunday arrived. A full house. The small Perpignan theatre fairly groaned, being far too small for the great audience. I walked upon the stage. Esteban does not appear until the *second*, and the first had been listened to coldly, I should say impa-

tiently. I walked upon the stage, I say, and volleys of *bravos* greeted me, not the *bravos* of *claqueurs*, but the *bravos* of the audience. One hardly ever mistakes one for the other, they have not the same sound. The *bravos* of the *claque* seem to stop short with mathematical precision, while those of the real audience go on irregularly and spontaneously. I played my scene, the first, in which Esteban tells Cora the story of his life, — Jeanne Horly was Cora, — and, as I played, I looked about to see if Baculard was in the hall. I wanted to know from what direction the hiss would come, assuming — But Baculard was not there. The *second* came to an end; I was recalled, but I said to the stage-manager: —

“No, don’t ring up the curtain, I shall not go out!”

“Why not? They are calling for you!”

“I do not want to appear to be forcing my popularity! After the *third*, if they recall me, well and good! but not after the *second*, it is too early!”

And despite the cheers, the clapping and stamping, the curtain was not raised.

There was rather a long intermission before the *third*. J. J. Puget took advantage of it to come behind the scenes and embrace me. He told me that I had been sublime, — author’s exaggeration. But he also told me that Baculard had arrived, with his hat at a fighting angle and an insulting sneer.

"Look out for the next act!" said poor Puget. "Suppose you cut the passage about the lasso, my dear Brichanteau, what do you say?"

"What do I say?"

I waited a moment to make my reply more impressive.

"I say that I would rather cut off my right hand than cut that passage. I am here for no other purpose than to throw it in that man's face!"

"For the love of God!" muttered J. J. Puget. "Why, if the *Argus* tears my play to pieces, it will be all your fault!"

"I take the whole responsibility upon myself!" I replied.

Ah! that third act! One of the most exciting occasions, and one of the successes of my life. The moment that I went upon the stage I had seen Baculard planted in the balcony, aiming an enormous opera-glass at me, with studied affectation. I had thereupon cleverly pretended not to notice him, and I played all the first part of the *third* as if the Janin of Rivesaltes were not there. Excellent Jules Janin! The idea of comparing that gallant, high-minded man to such a fellow as that! The spectators were visibly interested in the double play of *Le Gaucho*, in the drama itself, and in the sort of duel which was in progress between the actor on the stage and the pamphleteer in the hall. No one knew what he

expected to happen, but there was a smell of sulphur in the atmosphere as at the approach of a storm. Stretched out in his chair, his shoulders bearing hard against the back, Baculard cast at me — I saw it out of the corner of my eye — glances of ironical pity, such as one might bestow upon a circus clown. And I felt, yes, I felt magnetically that a part of the audience thought that his contemptuous attitude was a success. But I bided my time. My time was coming, — it came.

I had Don Pablo Zamoral before me, and it was time for me to hurl the famous passage in his face. Thereupon, turning a little away from Cambouscasce, who was playing Zamoral, I walked straight forward to the footlights — yes, so near that I almost brushed against the lamps! — and gazing in Baculard's face, gazing at him deliberately, with head erect and in a loud voice I declaimed, in trumpet tones, the avenging phrase that had been rumbling for two days past in my breast: —

"I will use against thee the weapon of the peons and the Gauchos, vile wretch, and I will drag thee to my hacienda, hanging from my saddle like a strangled jaguar!"

Ah! what an effect! What a thunderbolt! At first a sort of stupor! Every eye was turned upon him whom my gaze sought out and smote. An awful silence. He, pale and terrified; I, with my arm

extended like Mirabeau speaking to — to — Dreux — Dreux — to the king's messenger, whoever he was ! Then suddenly a great uproar, loud acclamations, a whirlwind of *bravos*, a tempest of cheers, a cyclone of enthusiasm.

“Vive Brichanteau !”

“Bravo, bravo, bravo, Brichanteau !”

“Again ! again ! again ! again !”

I have had ovations in my life, I may say, indeed, that I have had them without number, notwithstanding my final destiny, but I think I have never had one to be compared to that. The common herd — in politics as in art, in art as in politics — the vulgar herd loves audacious, daring men and unequivocal situations. Therein lies all the art of acting as well as the art of government. What I did on that occasion was not complicated ; I picked up a stone, as I would have picked up a pebble, and I hurled it at that Brummagem Goliath with my distinct enunciation for a sling. The man of the *Argus*, fairly livid with rage, tried to rise, put out his arm in my direction, hurled at me some retort which I did not hear, which no one could have heard ; but, amid the cheers which literally made the building tremble, which did not cease, which were constantly renewed with ever-increasing force, he sat down again, or rather cowered in his chair, crushed by the acclamations that greeted me, — me, the dispenser of justice.

The act ended with the scene between Esteban and Zamoral, — luckily, for it could not have gone on. When the curtain fell I was recalled once, twice, thrice, four times. The recalls were endless. And I continued to answer them! Vainly did I look for Baculard in the place he had occupied a few moments before. He was no longer there. He had slunk away in a rage at the turn affairs had taken.

I expected to see him appear in the wings, and I had my lasso in my hand ready for an emergency. Being naturally very dexterous, I had learned to use it, and genuine Gauchos had given me lessons during my South American tours. Baculard would have had a warm reception, I promise you; but Baculard did not appear. And the play came to an end, like the third act, amid enthusiastic bravos. Poor J. J. Puget was as red as a tomato with delight.

I was escorted home, must I say in triumph? Well, yes, in triumph. And the demonstration, I was well aware, was bestowed upon the man of stout heart as well as upon the artist.

The next day I received a visit from two friends of Baculard. They came to demand an apology or satisfaction for the affront of the preceding evening.

"Apology, never; satisfaction, to his heart's content," I replied. "But Monsieur Baculard knows my weapon."

"The lasso?"

"The lasso."

"You are jesting!"

"Not in the slightest degree; I fight with my acrobatic weapon. I fight with the lasso. And having declared my purpose publicly, before a whole theatre full of people whose *bravos* solemnly approved my conduct as by a plebiscite, I will fight with nothing but the lasso. I have said it."

This episode of the lasso amused Perpignan mightily, and Baculard was not considered the hero of the affair. In vain did his seconds, in their report published by the *Argus*, declare that I had declined to give the satisfaction demanded; the whole town was agreed that I declined nothing at all, since I was willing to fight with the Mexican lasso; and certain officers who declared at first that my idea was absolutely grotesque, subsequently, after reading Baculard's articles, declared that my method was a clever one, after all, and that, having been insulted in my profession, I had defended myself in my own way, and a very good way it was.

Remarks uncomplimentary to Baculard accumulated rapidly, and all the shrinking enmities united against the awe-inspiring man, now that he was down. He had spoken of administering a thrashing when he met me; but being informed that, with characteristic obstinacy, I always carried my lasso with me, he did

not put himself out to meet me. And by slow degrees, he, once so feared, became an object of ridicule. They wrote songs about him, they sent him, by way of mockery, miniature lassos in sealed packages. The *gamins* shouted at him from a safe distance, "Where 's your lasso, Baculard?" A circus passing through the town advertised — and that was the finishing stroke — *Lasso Exercise*, and its receipts were enormous. They had a white-faced clown dragged by an attendant about the ring with a lasso around his neck, and the clown, whose name was John Lee, was christened Baculard.

Finally, Baculard was in such a frenzy of impotent rage, he felt that he was so humiliated, so discredited, so uprooted, as it were, at Perpignan, that, 'faith, he took a decided step; he left sooner than he intended and took the train for Paris. I was applauded more warmly than ever the next day, when I appeared in *Gaspard le Pêcheur*. Everybody was satisfied, as was my honor.

"Ouf!" said Monsieur Carbonier, "I sha 'n't have to worry any more about the snarling and sneering of the *Argus*!"

I did n't like to say, "Never fear, others will come."

Little Horly alone had red eyes.

"He promised me," she said, "that he would look out for my future!"

To her, too, I was inclined to reply, "Never fear, others will come !"

I was mistaken, the poor girl had no future. Perhaps she trusted to the promises of too many successive Baculards. I saw her again last winter. She is a box-opener at the Théâtre Déjazet. Not very old, but aged, oh ! so aged ! And she talked about sending her child, now almost a man, to the Conservatory ! Ah ! *dame*, when one has the stage in one's blood ! I pity her, poor little Horly — and I admire her !

As for Baculard, he continues to put himself on exhibition, to torture, to crucify, to tear to pieces ; and he has made a fortune at the Bourse, or by gambling, I cannot say which. He is fashionable, he is correct. He lives well, he will die fat. And I, who am now nothing at all, say to myself, when I think of him, who has made some name for himself although he does not amount to much, after all, — I say to myself : —

"All the same, had it not been for the lasso, the Jules Janin of Rivesaltes might have stayed down at Perpignan ! It was I — I, Brichanteau — who enriched Paris with him !"

III.

THE CARD PHOTOGRAPH.

You must see from these confidences that I do not gloss over the truth. I have just described one of my notable exploits ; I would tell you of all my weaknesses with the same frankness. My adventure with Lady Maud Hartson, for example, exhibits me in a less heroic light. I will not, however, keep silent concerning it. What would you have ? I am a sincere man. And — strangely enough — the *Pirates of the Savane* was involved in that page of my destiny also. Melodrama, what hast thou against me ?

If I were called upon to give practical advice in a love affair, I would repeat to the woman the trite injunction, “ Never write ! ” and I would say to the man, “ Never give your photograph ! ” How photographers have persecuted me to induce me to pose for hours at a time ! I have seen my face so often in their show-windows in the provinces, and in all sizes : cabinets, cards, life size and stereoscopic size ! I can truly say that if I had as many crowns as photographs I should be a millionaire. I knew how to vary my attitudes, I did not need the legendary : *Now don't*

move ! to keep me from moving. For the camera, as for Montèscore, I was the ideal model !

Ideal, not only by reason of my immobility — I did not even wink, being accustomed to look the sun of Art full in the face ! — but I was ideal also because of the diverse types I could furnish. I arranged and disarranged my hair at will : scattered to the winds like a poet, pulled over my forehead like a conspirator, brushed flat on my temples like a student of the Middle Ages, erect and bristling on occasion, like a lion's mane. And the play of my features harmonized with the modifications of my head-dress. My mask is so mobile, monsieur, tragic and comic in turn, that a learned physician, author of a *Treatise on the Human Face*, a large octavo, crowned by the Academy of Sciences, asked me to pose for the different expressions he described in his book : Wrath, Envy, Avarice, Lust. And I did it. If you ever come across Doctor Fargeas's *Treatise on the Human Face*, and if you scrutinize the features in the illustrations of various gentlemen in an exasperated or ecstatic frame of mind which you will find there, you will see only me, Brichanteau. My portrait is there a hundred and sixteen times in different attitudes. The only thing lacking to my glory was to figure thus in a medical book.

So, you see, I have had my picture taken many times in my life, and I have given away vast quan-

ties of them, some to cities, some to women. I had regular formulæ for the purpose : "*To my dear Anna, forever and ever !*" Or, "*To the noble city of Saint-Gaudens, in memory of a never-to-be-forgotten evening. Her guest who would gladly be her son.*" Or, again, "*To the Municipal Council of Pontarlier. An adopted child !*" These municipal dedications cost me little ; I enjoyed writing them, in a style that was at once simple, and I venture to say, artistic ; and, even if they have not procured for me the lasting gratitude of the cities I have visited, — no Municipal Council ever acknowledged the receipt of my gift, — at least they have never been a source of embarrassment to me in my career. Not in the least degree.

I cannot say as much of the portraits with what I will call feminine dedications. To say nothing of the experience I have sometimes had of finding on the quays, in boxes sold at a sou, like the oldest of old books, portraits of myself accompanied by quatrains which have cost me many a wakeful night, — to say nothing of all that, I have had the mortification to receive, by special messenger, more than one of those photographed souvenirs, returned to me with a most discourteous letter from some furious husband or some supplanted lover. How is it that my dedicatory imprudences have not oftener led me to the duelling-ground ? Perhaps because the way I fenced in *Le Bossu* or *La Dame de Monsoreau* made an

impression on those malcontents, whose prudence equalled their guile. Well, between ourselves, as I have passed my sixtieth year, I can venture to tell you that I was and am only a very ordinary fencer. In case of a duel my heart is at the end of my sword ; but I have at my service neither the address of Bussy d'Amboise nor Lagardère's famous thrust. I created an illusion. By dint of my art and my virtuosity I had the awe-inspiring air of a swashbuckler, — an optical illusion ; let us not speak ill of it, as it served me well.

Among the vast number of faces, melancholy or smiling, that stand out against the misty background of memory, my thoughts linger with peculiar pleasure about that of an adorable Englishwoman whom I had the good fortune to meet at Pau. She was passing the winter there for her health, and I was acting with the Lestaffier troupe. Indeed, Lady Maud was the cause of a rupture between the manager and myself. I was not insensible to the charms of my manager, — a superior and charming woman, an administrator of the first rank, and very lively in her leisure moments. But jealous. That was the least of her faults. Very jealous. But jealousy is the spice of love. *Othella*, I called my manager *Othella* !

Lady Maud Hartson belonged to the category of English brunettes, whom I consider more beautiful than blondes, because, with their amber-colored complexion and their caressing eyes, they have the most

exquisitely sweet disposition, whereas there is an indefinable something of the wild beast under the apparent amiability of the blonde. A brunette with the sweet exterior of the blonde, that is my ideal ! Twenty-six years of age, rather tall, — too tall, in fact, — and long-limbed ; but I compared her long, flexible figure to the stalk of a lily, a lovely, graceful lily. I had noticed Lady Maud for the first time in one of the proscenium boxes, one evening when I was playing the *Pirates of the Savane*. I remember how miserable I was that evening because I was required to act faster than usual. As the drama did not develop sufficient drawing power, my manager conceived the idea — an excellent one from a practical standpoint, but heart-rending from the standpoint of art — of adding an operetta ! I hate an operetta ! As a disciple of the highest form of art, I consider it beneath my dignity to divert myself with parodies. But one must bow to facts. Without an operetta to come after the play, the *Pirates* drew a six-hundred-franc house ; with an operetta, the receipts were nineteen hundred francs. I resigned myself therefore to serve as a curtain-raiser for the operetta. But Madame Lestaffier had said to me : —

“ Brichanteau, the performance will last too long, and they ’ll make us pay for extra gas. Act faster.”

“ Faster ! Faster ! And what about the by-play ? A melodrama lives on by-play, just like a tragedy !

If I rush through it on post-horses, it is all up with it ! No fine effects, no terror, no handkerchiefs, — nothing ! ”

“ What can I do, Brichanteau ? The gas makes all the trouble. We must end at midnight. Cut if you choose, but make it go faster ! ”

I could not make up my mind to cut my part. A part is a perfect whole. One sentence leads to another. And even in a melodrama like the *Pirates*, in an *unliterary* rôle like Andrès, I prefer to respect the author's ideas. Alas ! necessity is its own law ! I said to myself, “ Very well, I will act more quickly ! ” And I recall that in the *third* my acting ceased to be dramaturgic, if I may use the expression, and became gymnastic. Yes, veritable gymnastics. But *actor* does not mean simply *reciter*. The well-equipped actor goes and comes, runs hither and thither — in a word, *acts*. The soul of Talma in the body of a clown. Yes, monsieur ! A varied intelligence well served by supple organs. *Voilà !*

Oh ! the great scene in the *third* ! Did you ever see the *Pirates of the Savane* ? No ? That's surprising and a great pity. There is in the *third* a stage-setting that is a *clou*, a veritable *clou*, and a scene in which, if I do say it, I was simply overwhelming. I venture to use the word because it is true. I never, in any city, failed to make a hit in that scene.

In the *third*, then, the scene is laid on a plateau, with a perpendicular cliff on the *garden* side separated from a high rock on the *courtyard* side — the *courtyard* is at the spectator's right, the *garden* at his left — by a mountain torrent which foams, or is supposed to foam, between two steep banks. To reach the plateau you must climb up a very narrow stairway cut in the rock. In the background, lakes, forest, prairies. You can see it in your mind's eye.

It was on that plateau, above the torrent, that I rescued Eva. Eva was a child of six, whom I, as Andrès, the leading man's part, with the assistance of Jonathan, first comedian, and Pivoine, second comedian, saved from the hatred of Ribeiro, the villain. It is a fetching situation. In the first place Andrès, bound hand and foot, is about to be murdered by Ramon, a secondary character, when Eva, just as the pirate approaches me, unbinds my hands; the result being that I, throwing Ramon to the ground, seize an axe and strike at him, which does not prevent his darting off among the rocks to warn his comrades.

His comrades are the pirates of the Savane. Ramon leads them on. They are heard scaling the cliffs. How are we to escape? There is no bridge over the torrent. No, there is none. Then it is that I cry, "I will make one!"

I attack a cedar with lusty blows of the axe, while Pivoine rolls stones over the edge of the plateau. Jonathan assists me. He, too, attacks the cedar. The tree bends. One more push. We put our shoulders against it and the trunk falls with a tremendous crash across the stream. Good. There is the bridge we wanted. I take Eva in my arms and walk slowly across the bridge. Pivoine and Jonathan follow me. Hearing the pirates approaching, I cry : —

“Plunge into the forest to avoid the bullets ! Go toward the south and stay not until you reach the Savane. As for me, I will close the path to the pirates ! ”

That is the grand climax. Andrès seizes the axe once more, or rather I, as Andrès, do it, and hack away anew at the trunk of the cedar. My purpose is to cut it in two before the arrival of the pirates. And just as they arrive — tremendous effect ! — the tree falls into the torrent.

Ramon rushes upon me.

“It is he ! We have him ! ” he cries.

“Not yet ! ” I reply.

And I stab him.

Then, crying out, “May God protect me ! ” I plunge into the torrent. Ramon, at his last gasp, says to his men : —

“Fire on him ! ”

I swim amid the bullets. The audience sees me

disappear, then reappear, borne onward by the current, across the transparent lake, which — so says the book of the play — plunges over the precipice. Oh! that is not mere clap-trap; no, but drama, honest drama.

If, after that scene, I did not set the audience on fire, I should not have been Brichanteau. Only, I needed time to portion out the compassion, the terror, the impression of heroism, the divers sentiments that make up that Scene VII. of the *third*. There are psychological necessities. The catastrophe of a drama must not be *scorched* by rapid acting.

And my manager kept saying to me from the wings: —

“The gas, Brichanteau! The gas! No extras! There are two acts more, and *Geneviève de Brabant* after that!”

What could I do? I had no choice; I redoubled my energy and promptitude. I gained time, and in order to gain time I undressed on the stage, yes, on the stage, before the audience, in order to avoid the *entr'acte* while the following scene, *Moralès' hacienda*, was being set up behind the curtain.

I did everything at once. I unbuttoned my clothes as I cut down the cedar. A blow with the axe. A button. I struck with one hand, undressed with the other. It made my costume all the more pictur-

esque. A blow with the axe. A button. A blow with the dagger. A button. I was at work on a button when I jumped into the torrent.

"*May God (a button) protect me!*"

And at last I disappeared. I had never seen spectators more excited, stirred up, beside themselves. They called for me again and again.

"No curtain!" I cried. "Don't raise the curtain!"

I did n't wish to make Madame Lestaffier lose any time. I sacrificed the triumph of my self-esteem as an artist, to the question, the paltry question of gas. But could I refuse my manager anything?

However, after the *fifth*, the whole hall rang with cries for Andrès: "*Brichanteau! Brichanteau!*" I had to return and bow my acknowledgments, — bow in the setting of the first act of *Geneviève de Brabant*, which the scene-shifters were already at work upon. I bowed, but very hastily, — not so hastily, however, that I did not notice the really flattering and at the same time patrician attitude of a tall, lovely brunette, in the proscenium box on the left of the stage, who was applauding vigorously, standing up, leaning half over the rail, her white-gloved hands striking against each other like pretty little battledores.

A great lady, evidently! Even during my rapid acting and necessarily hurried by-play, I had noticed the frequent use of her opera-glass, and, feeling

highly flattered by the *bravos* which rose above those from the audience, and which — forgive the expression — were the flower of them all, I bowed more carefully, with respect blended with dignity, before the fair stranger.

She was touched by it, and her patrician hands clapped the louder.

As soon as I returned to the wings, Madame Lestaffier said to me with an expression of pique :

“Well, your Englishwoman makes a fine audience, does n’t she ?”

And as I stared at her in blank amazement, she continued : —

“Oh ! yes, an excellent audience ! She did n’t take her eyes off you during the performance. If her eyes had teeth, you would be eaten up !”

My manager was a charming woman, altogether charming, but she was jealous. And her jealousy had enabled her to detect manœuvres and divine a thought that I, in my artistic fervor and my precipitate haste to unbutton my clothes, should never have dreamed of suspecting. Lady Maud — it was Lady Maud — had simply been stricken by the thunderbolt as she watched Andrès. Such amorous physical phenomena are of frequent occurrence, the actor or actress being, to the public, the incarnation of the ideal, — the ideal of courage, of innocence, or of honor.

“ *Mon Dieu!* is it for such as he that women go astray ? ”

as says the queen enamoured of her prime minister, who is only a lackey, — an improbable story.

I was walking the next day on the terrace, admiring the magnificent panorama of the trees tinged by winter with all the hues of copper, from dull red to the yellow of fine gold, and the Pyrenees in the background like a gigantic necklace of snow in which each mountain was a huge pearl, when, close beside me, gazing at the same landscape and dreaming the same dream, I saw the lovely Englishwoman who had clapped her hands the night before at the exploits, the wood-cutting, and the buttons of *Andrès*. I recognized her at once, she also recognized me, and we talked together. She had a book of poetry in her hand, and she told me that she had come there to read facing the Pyrenees, in order to induce a frame of mind adequate to the beautiful picture.

Adequate surprised me a little.¹ But I soon realized that I was in the presence of an exceedingly literary, and, as they say in England, æsthetic person. She was reading Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, of whom I have heard many pleasant things said, although he never wrote for the stage.

¹ The French word *adéquat* which is here used is, strictly speaking, a philosophical term seldom used in ordinary conversation.

"I am very happy to meet you, monsieur," she said, "for you afforded me much pleasure last night in that melodrama. I only wonder how you can express so many simple, human sentiments amid such a mass of improbable incidents. You would be so fine in Shakespeare! Oh! how fine!"

You would have said that that ideal creature — for I looked her over point by point, and she was ideal — had divined all that there was within me of repressed, unsatisfied dreams. Shakespeare! To act Shakespeare! *Parbleu!* I had no other ambition, and I thought of nothing but translating Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello! Those sons of genius were made to my measure! But to play Shakespeare in the provinces! Shakespeare, when Madame Lestaffier had to resort to Offenbach's music to make melodrama go!

"I see, madame," I replied, "that you have a soul!"

She was devoted to literature. She told me that she even wrote comedies in her leisure moments.

"Really, madame?"

"Yes, I have written a *Dalila*, — she pronounced it *Délilé*, — and I have designed the costumes for it too. I dream of strange costumes — *à la* Botticelli. But even more original than his. For instance, I would give my Dalila a very strange kind of hair — very — very — very suggestive. I would have her wear — wear — *blue* hair!"

"Blue?"

"Yes, blue! Nothing commonplace. Oh! the commonplace! You do not like the commonplace either, do you, Monsieur Brichanteau?"

"I hate it, madame, I abhor it. But blue —"

"Blue — it is blue in my dreams!"

And as she pronounced the word *blue*, she smiled and turned her pretty, dark, very sallow face to look over her shoulder; she said it so prettily that it seemed to me perfectly natural that Dalila should have blue hair. And in any event what difference did it make to me?

What pleased me was that the woman was fascinating, that it was soft and mild on the terrace, and that our delightful chat had a lovely Pyrenean landscape for a frame. I learned in a very few moments that my companion's name was Lady Maud Hartson, that she was married to one of those English travellers who pass their lives away from home, and that she had a passion for letters, art, music, and the drama, as her husband had a passion for gambling.

She was kind enough to invite me to come and hear her read one of her own productions and take *a cup of tea*; and when I remarked that my knowledge of English was very slight, that I could simply count up to twenty, ask for a room at a hotel, or for a ticket at a railway station, etc., — whatever was necessary in travelling — she replied: —

"Oh! I will translate the scenes to you as I go along."

I knew all about those ghastly *séances*, when an author has you in his clutches, planted in a chair, face to face with him, and inflicts upon you the torture of the manuscript. One day, at Reims, I almost had an attack of apoplexy, in the office of a notary who was reading me a Greek comedy. But on this occasion the invitation to the reading assumed the aspect of a love affair, and I should have been very ill-advised to refuse to listen to *Délile*, Lady Hartson's fair one with blue locks.

"I will be on hand promptly, milady, at whatever hour you do me the honor to name!"

"Very well, to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock, Monsieur Brichanteau!"

"To-morrow at five o'clock, milady! Hôtel Gas-sion, is it not?"

"No, oh, no; I have hired apartments opposite the house where Bernadotte was born."

And she went away with her volume of verse under her arm, with the undulating motion of a great swan, — *like a giraffe*, Madame Lestaffier would have said.

The next afternoon at five o'clock I waited upon Lady Maud, and I must confess that I had dreamed of the lovely long-limbed Englishwoman, who had spoken to me so sweetly of Shakespeare. Her *Dalila*

frightened me not a little, but she had such beautiful eyes, had Lady Maud, and her conversation was so enthralling.

Although much agitated when I rang the seductive creature's bell, I was entirely self-possessed when I crossed her threshold.

"Lady Maud Hartson!" I demanded, in the tone of Benvenuto Cellini, entering the salon of the Duchesse d'Étampes.

A lackey, after looking me over from head to foot, ushered me into a salon, oddly furnished, the details of which I grasped in a rapid circular glance, being accustomed to the arrangement of scenery and stage-setting. That salon — a most original idea — was filled with tiger and leopard skins. They lay on the floor, they were thrown over couches. Here and there weapons were scattered about, carbines of English make, and the latest improved revolvers. Some white linen clothes, frayed at the edges and stained with brownish spots, which might, strictly speaking, be blood, — perhaps mud, — were tossed upon an arm-chair, and beside them was a sort of cap made of cork — *a tropical helmet*. Under the table, which was covered with papers, was a pair of enormous, iron-shod boots.

Mechanically, without any purpose to be indiscreet, I glanced at certain large sheets of azure blue paper — blue like Dalila's hair — which were kept

from blowing about the room by a paper-weight made of a piece of an elephant's tusk. And I read these words, which I at once translated to myself:

CHAPTER XII.

MY ELEVENTH TIGER.

"My eleventh tiger!"

I readily guessed that they were a sportsman's notes of travel, and, glancing anew at the relics of wild beasts, leopards or jaguars, I said to myself that if, as I could not doubt, that journal was Lord Hartson's and those tiger-skins the product of Lord Hartson's hunting, Lady Maud, who had every right to be beautiful, had great need to be prudent. And why had that devilish lackey taken pains to make me wait among those guns and revolvers and sheets of azure paper: *My eleventh tiger?*

My first thought, which came to me like a flash, was to excuse myself, to leave my card, and to abandon to oblivion the image of the lovely English brunette whose glance haunted me. But I said to myself that danger seasons love. And then, too, I am the reverse of cowardly.

I thought of Saint-Mégrin going to the Duchesse de Guise's, and I added, mentally:—

"What difference does it make to you, Brichanteau? You are young, the woman is fair. What care you for the duke?"

Especially as Lord Hartson was now at Luchon, or rather at Portillon, where he was gambling heavily. He won, by the way. Lucky at play, unlucky in love. I would not have staked a hundred sous three hours later, I was so happy in my love. Yes, from Rossetti to Shakespeare, and from her play, *The Sorrow of Thinking*, a play which she called *reflectionist*, and which ended with the ecstasy of Nirvana, the blissful fading away into the infinite, from poet to poet, and, as the saying is, from the thread to the needle, we had reached a point where we had earned the vengeance of milord and a shot from the rifle of the slayer of tigers.

"Oh! he would kill me if he knew," she said, "and he would kill you too! Terrible, it's terrible! But what effect has that thought on you, my dear!"

"None at all, oh! none at all! It has none at all. Absolutely none at all!"

"Besides, — do not you also kill wild beasts, *darling?*"

"I?"

"Yes, you — Andrès — the *Pirates of the Savane!*"

"Why, to be sure! — of course! — I kill a tiger on the stage and appear with the skin over my shoulders. And then, throwing it at my feet, I say: 'Dead! — a noble animal, eh, comrades?' Indeed, it's my *entrée* in the *second*, — a fine *entrée*, as you saw! — But it's

a property tiger, a stage affair, while he — he — *my eleventh tiger* — How many tigers has Lord Hartson killed, pray? ”

“How many? What do you care, my dear? ”

“Oh! I don’t dream of trying it myself, but just for curiosity, you know — ”

“Vulgar sport — commonplace skill! What are tigers to you? ”

“Oh! it’s not the tigers! But curiosity, vulgar curiosity.”

“Very well,” said she, “he has killed twenty!”

“Twenty? ”

“Perhaps thirty. I don’t really know. I never talk about those things. Come, *darling*, repeat the great speech from *Ruy Blas*!”

I recited the great speech from *Ruy Blas* as well as I could, but I returned inevitably to the tigers, as other people return to their *moutons*.

“Thirty,” I said, “do you think so? He has killed thirty!”

And Lady Maud tenderly replied, —

“You have killed more than that, *darling*, in the *Pirates of the Savane*!”

I did my best to convince her that it was by no means the same thing. I killed my tigers in imagination. I killed them in a dream. She declared that that was much the superior way, and that all Lord Hartson’s tigers were not worth the one *Andrès*

carried on his shoulders in his fine *entrée* in the *second*.

She was certainly very fond of me. However, as Madame Lestaffier's company had an engagement at Mont-de-Marsan, I was obliged to leave Lady Maud; but we parted with a solemn agreement to meet again. After that, from time to time, when I was far away from her in the course of my artistic peregrinations, I received verses, written in her aristocratic hand, long like herself. Often, just as I was going on the stage, the telegraph would bring me one of her thoughts: "*Success to you! Remember!*" One day, at Bordeaux, — I was playing in *La Bouquetière des Innocents* at the Théâtre-Louis, — the concierge handed me a little note on blue paper, the husband's azure paper, on which he noted down his massacres of tigers.

"I am coming," so ran the note. "Farewell until this evening!"

And that evening, in the proscenium box on the right, I saw Lady Maud, who applauded me at Bordeaux in the *Bouquetière des Innocents*, as she had applauded me at Pau in the *Pirates of the Savane*. That was the very evening when I came near cancelling my engagement with Madame Lestaffier; for she had the face to say to me: —

"Does your tall hop-pole travel about like the Wandering Jew?"

It all blew over, because I did not choose to defend a woman whom I had no right to compromise. But Madame Lestaffier had wounded me to the quick. She repented afterward ; it was too late.

Lady Maud was alone at Bordeaux, — all alone. Lord Hartson was still gambling, somewhere or other, *à la cantonade*. We belonged to each other, but I belonged to the public, and in that great city of Bordeaux we had to find ways of meeting without arousing suspicion. Oh ! she would have defied everybody and everything, would Lady Maud ! But I was prudent for her, and I felt the prying eyes of Madame Lestaffier following my every act. We made appointments to meet at the Museum, and I said to Lady Maud, standing in front of the pictures, "I love you !" There is a huge statue of Louis XVI. there, a gigantic affair, which has heard our vows, and blessed them, I doubt not.

Then, too, we went to Lormont, each by a different boat, and met there at a little restaurant where the grisettes went to eat fried fish on Sundays, but where on week-days we were certain to be alone. It was delightful. On the terrace — it was written that there should always be a terrace in my romance with Lady Maud — we talked, watched the boats passing up and down the Gironde, and the trains puffing over Lormont bridge, and we were surrounded by lovely May lilacs, of which Lady Hartson said : —

"I adore the color of lilacs! I will give you some lilacs, yes, lilacs done in water-color by myself!"

That same day Lady Maud suddenly said to me, speaking of the promised water-color:—

"But your photograph, *darling*, I have no photograph of you, you know!"

"My photograph?"

"Yes, I would like to paint your portrait, too,—to keep it. Have you a photograph?"

I had one. I thought it extremely good. A card photograph, in one of the stock costumes, with the features of Louis XIV. I liked it particularly on that account. It recalled to me the costume I should have worn on the boards of the Comédie-Française if fate had been just, and, moreover, the image of a king whom I can forgive much because he did much for letters. The man who breakfasted with Molière was a man indeed! I thought a great deal of that picture, therefore, as it was the only copy, and I felt that I was very foolish to take it from my letter-case to show Lady Maud.

She glanced at it and uttered an exclamation:—

"It is superb!"

I was flattered, but ill at ease. I felt that the picture had already ceased to belong to me.

"Yes," she said again, "it is superb, and I am going to keep it!"

"Another one, perhaps!"

"No, no, I want this one; I must have it. I demand a dedication also!"

How could I refuse? I called the maid who had brought us the omelet with white wine, and asked her for a little ink. And then and there, on the little restaurant table, in that bower of lilacs, I wrote, at the bottom of the photograph, this dedication, the idea of which came to me, I assure you, quite without reflection:—

A LADY MAUD.

*Non, ce portrait, ce n'est pas moi,
Vous le reconnaitrez sans peine :
Car, Madame, si j'étais roi,
Vous savez que vous seriez reine !¹*

and I signed:—

SÉBASTIEN BRICHANTEAU.

Lormont. Un jour de mai.

One is always foolish to sign one's name. One is always foolish to write. Always, always. One is far more foolish to put one's name at the end of a quatrain. But, let me tell you, Lady Maud was enchanted!

"Oh! delicious! delicious! Not very involved, but so gallant and *very* French, *darling*, very —"

¹ No madame, it is not I,
You will see it readily:
For, madame, full well you ween,
If I were king you would be queen!

“What would you have, milady? I am a simple man!”

“And an exquisite one!”

She held out her aristocratic hand, which I kissed; and she herself, after touching her lips to the somewhat faded photograph, slipped it into her portfolio and subsequently put it away in a little chamois-skin bag, bound with silver and bearing her cipher.

That day I very soon forgot my photograph, to remember only the living reality, what I had before me and belonging to me!

Then I left Bordeaux; I resumed my wandering existence, like that of the troubadours; I had had a definitive falling-out with Madame Lestaffier, after a scene in which the endearments of passion were succeeded by bitter insults, as was naturally the case, and I thought only mistily of the lovely English-woman whom fate had placed like an ideal vengeance, on my stony path, — very rough and stony, alas!

In very truth I thought of her as in a dream, — always flattered to receive from her a note upon azure paper, always enchanted to know that there was, somewhere in the world, an aristocratic creature who did not forget Andrès the slayer of tigers. But to be perfectly frank, that delightful memory, mingled with others, did not interfere with my sleep. One morning, indeed, at Marseilles, after a fine night's sleep,

succeeding a triumphal evening, during which I had acted *Le Docteur Noir* at the Théâtre des Variétés — one of Frédéric's rôles — I was lying half-awake, meditating upon the artistic impressions of the preceding evening, when there came a knock at the door of my room.

"Come in !"

"Open the door, then," answered a voice with an English accent.

I quickly rose, drew on my trousers, gave a twist to my dishevelled hair, and opened the door.

Thereupon a man, dressed entirely in gray, rushed into the room like a hurricane, removing and replacing his felt hat with a single abrupt motion, and — men whose lives contain a dash of romance have such presentiments — I knew that this stranger — the thought passed through my mind like a flash — was the husband, Lord Hartson, the tiger-killer, my *eleventh tiger* !

I can still see the tall, red-haired Englishman, with the hair plastered down on his forehead, a long beard that had no end — a tawny beard — and eyes as fixed and staring as glass eyes, in a gaunt bony face, bronzed by the suns of India ; a tall, thin, cold-blooded devil, who, producing a card photograph from an alligator-skin portfolio that made me think, "It was he who killed that alligator ; he took aim at him with those glassy eyes," said to me : —

"This photograph! this photograph in a *mountebank* costume, — is it you?"

I did not need to look at the photograph. It was mine. In a mountebank costume! He called my costume as Louis XIV. in *Mademoiselle de la Vallière* a mountebank costume, and I longed to reply: —

"My lord, do you know what clothes you are talking about? A great king's clothes, my lord!"

But I restrained myself. I cannot say why, for I was not afraid, but I restrained myself. The crocodile's skin, the eleventh tiger perhaps! Yes, I confess, that eleventh tiger was much in my thoughts. And that devilish, extraordinary, vitreous stare, too. In short, I restrained myself.

He repeated, persistently: —

"Is this *mountebank* you?"

I replied with great dignity: —

"It would ill become me to deny it, my lord!"

"You are Sébastien Brichanteau?"

"I am Sébastien Brichanteau!"

"Very good," said he.

I noticed, through his tawny beard, a peculiar sneer that revealed a row of remarkable canine teeth, protruding from beneath his lip like a boar's tusks.

"What does it matter?" I said to myself. "You must sell your life dearly, like Bussy d'Amboise,

that's all." And very coolly, if I do say it, I determined to measure my strength against the auburn-haired hunter of wild beasts.

But Lord Hartson very carefully replaced the photograph with the quatrain in the alligator-skin portfolio, stowed it away in his gray waistcoat, which he buttoned with great care, and said to me:—

" *Good!* I am satisfied."

Satisfied — the word had an ironical sound. I was thinking of the probable outcome of the adventure, and I already imagined that I heard, but without a qualm, the cocking of the pistols with which we were to fight.

"This photograph," continued the tall devil, coolly, "I will keep. It is a fetich!"

"A fetich?"

I did not understand, I tried to guess his meaning. This tiger-killer had become a sphinx.

"I wanted to know if this picture of a *mountebank*" — how he clung to the word! — "was really a picture of you."

"I understand, my lord," — and I tried to smile, — "it was because of the quatrain. Pray believe that I do not claim to be a poet."

The staring eyes, the glassy eyes, showed a trace of animation.

"Oh! the quatrain — no, no! The quatrain is execrable! The quatrain is commonplace, ridiculous!"

No, it is on account of the photograph of yourself—yes, of you.”

Phlegmatically, in an icy tone which I shall never forget and of which I made a mental note, to adopt in the rôle of the Duke of Alva, Lord Hartson added : —

“Yes, my only passion is play. Poetry is beneath contempt! Play and the chase, another kind of play. And since I lost the finger-nail of a fellow whom I killed at Boulak, I have had no fetich. I lost, lost, — a vein of black luck. I found this photograph — Where did I find it? I need not tell you, and never, never shall any other than myself keep it in a portfolio. Never. Under present conditions, the picture of a mountebank, a clown” — I leaped or at least was on the point of leaping at him at each word — “the photograph of a person in disguise, and of a famous travesty” — I was touched — “should be an excellent fetich — excellent. It is really you, Lady Maud did not lie to me. Excellent. Adieu, monsieur.”

And — I invent nothing, I never invent — Lord Hartson, the terrible Lord Hartson, turning on his heel like an automaton, disappeared, leaving me stupefied, dazed, crushed, believing neither my eyes nor my ears.

For a single moment I thought of running after him into the hall, of calling him back, of demanding

an explanation from him, before the whole hotel, of the terms *clown* and *mountebank*.

But again I restrained myself. On the stage one must be master of his acting ; in life, of his temper. And, after all, was the insult really an insult ? Mountebanks and clowns have artistic minds. They are our brothers, — our wandering brothers. There are strolling artists whom I respect more highly than some much applauded mediocrities.

And then, too, it was all so astonishing, so unexpected, so impossible, the idea of the tiger-slayer returning home enchanted because he had found and obtained possession of a *fetich* !

The passion for gambling, monsieur, ah ! the passion for gambling is as mad as love ! I learned, by the way, that Lord Hartson broke the bank one winter at Monte Carlo !

Indeed, his name became proverbial there as *the tall Englishman who always wins*.

That winter Lady Maud joined me at Angers. She passed the season at a château on the banks of the Loire, where she wrote her *Mémoires* for an American review. *My First Love*, — not her eleventh tiger, no ! — her first *love* ! Perhaps ere this she has told the story of her eleventh love ! I know nothing about her. I have never seen her since. Her literary tastes bored me.

At Angers I said to her :

"That was all very well for once, you see. You left my picture lying around in your box of paints, but I don't bear you any grudge on that account. But the affair might have turned out disastrously. Gambling's all right, but there's the chase too, there's the chase. I've no objection to being a fetich. Fetich it is! But when it comes to being a target! A target, dear heart! Think of that, — a target! To break¹ the bank is all very well. But to blow out¹ brains! Ah! that prospect is less tempting!"

I must confess that Lady Maud looked at me that day with an expression in which her æsthetic gentleness was replaced by an irony as ferocious as her husband's teeth.

"Dust! human dust!" was her reply.

I understood that, being a symbolist, she intended those words as a symbol that was not altogether complimentary to me. What cared I? *Farewell!* Adieu! And, as for tigers, I still preferred those I continued to kill in the *Pirates of the Savane*.

I have often regretted having forfeited the esteem of an artist like my manager, Madame Lestaffier, for love of that great lady. But I learned one lesson, — never to give away any more photographs. Never, never, never! To Municipal Councils, yes! *Souvenir of a cordial Reception*. But those are official

¹ *Faire sauter*

photographs ; they never were the cause of any one's death !

And some day, when his fetich has lost its power, perhaps Lord Hartson will blow out his brains in some hotel on the sea-coast, and the police officials and reporters will be much amazed, no doubt, to find my photograph in his wallet over his heart !

Although a fetich for him, I have never, alas ! brought myself any luck !

IV.

ONE OF BRICHANTEAU'S GREAT DAYS.

LOUIS XI. ! A great king and a grand rôle ! I have played it, monsieur. And under such circumstances ! You would hardly believe me if I should tell you the story. It left with me a memory of pleasure, a perfume of joy. *Louis XI. !* — that was my great day ! one of my great days, for, God be thanked, my career is well filled with them ! There are unknown devotees of art, monsieur, who have accumulated in their lives as many victories as the most famous artists, and who have tasted, like all celebrated, illustrious, successful men, the intoxication of success. Yes, on my word I sometimes say to myself that I would not give my artistic life, unworthy as it is to be written, for that of a *sociétaire* of the Comédie-Française.

I have no regular engagement, I have had no chance ; I am a Bohemian, a free-lance of art, but I have had my hour ! — my hours !

Louis XI., the performance of Louis XI. at Compiègne, that is something to remember ! My old comrade Courtillier had undertaken to produce it ;

my comrade and my pupil. He knew that I was without an engagement as usual, I, who at one time, being a youngster and even then well spoken of, had been within an ace of giving Rachel her cue in America, I whom the great Mélingue used to call familiarly the little Mélingue. Courtillier, when he was organizing a tour, made up to me in wages the lessons I had given him. A good fellow, not ungrateful, an artist's soul. We were made, he and I, to commune together in the domain of the Beautiful.

Courtillier had offered me the part of Tristan in *Louis XI*. A fair part. An apparition, a cold, forbidding creature. In a word, a sort of accommodation part. I knew it thoroughly. Monsieur Beauvallet gave me the traditions of the part at the Conservatory, and I had long before rummaged through the texts and memoirs and chronicles to saturate myself with the character. Everything depends on saturating one's self with the past, monsieur, when one seeks to evoke an historical figure. I annotated the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* to enable me to play Napoléon better. So I was saturated with Tristan. I hated him when I acted him. Yes, I hated him in order to make him more hateful. I am for the art militant, the art that proves something.

So I was to play Tristan ! But, if I played Tristan, who would play Louis XI. ? I give you a thousand guesses ! Monsieur Talbot of the Comédie-Française !

I have n't a word to say against Monsieur Talbot, who is a charming man, who adores his art and is devoted to his pupils, and has played the *Avare* and Triboulet with remarkable success; but, between him and myself, perhaps Courtillier should not have hesitated. He knew that I had dug up my Louis XI. among the archives. I had seen Ligier in *Les Grands Vassaux*. Very good, Ligier was. A little undersized, but very good. Picturesque and profound. Another one of those who saturate themselves with the characters they represent. But what could you expect? Courtillier had the Talbot superstition. A *sociétaire*, you understand! And *Sociétaire de la Comédie-Française* on the posters means doubling up the receipts.

So it was that, on a damp, unhealthy day in February, like gallant soldiers setting out for the seat of war, we took the Compiègne train at the Gare du Nord at 8.55 in the morning, all in the best of spirits. We talked together pleasantly in the train. General exchange of views upon art and its destiny, while the engine bore us along, puffing vigorously — I was about to say *sifflant*,¹ but that would have had a satirical sound. Courtillier told us that Thibouville, the professor, who, after acting at the Odéon, had become Monsieur de Rothschild's reader, advised his pupils to put a weight on their stomachs and accustom themselves to breathing despite that obstacle.

¹ *Sifflant* (whistling) means also *hissing*.

An excellent method of acquiring the power to recite a long speech without stopping for breath. I maintained, for my part, that no known method was equal to that of drawing in the breath, and that no artist could ever tell, when he walked on to the stage, whether he was going to act well or ill. That depends on the state of his mind. It is an everlasting subject of controversy.

We were still arguing when we reached Compiègne, at 10.24, and we continued to argue as we sat about the table at the *Hôtel de la Cloche*, where we breakfasted. Then I walked about the city, all by myself, dreaming of Tristan, regretting Louis XI., and devoting special attention to the out-of-the-way corners of the old town, where I might find some stray bits of gothic architecture, in order to transport my mind, through the medium of my eyes, back to the epoch when the man I was to represent flourished. Yes, monsieur, after texts, monuments. That is the way the actor becomes the equal of the historian. I who speak to you have read Michaud's *History of the Crusades* as a preparation for acting Nérestan's confidant in *Zaire*. But by that means, as all my comrades will tell you, I made my mark in the part!

Having studied Compiègne from Tristan's standpoint, I was returning thoughtfully to the hotel, when I saw two men in the doorway, both much excited, but in very different ways. The first, my com-

rade and pupil, Courtillier, seemed in despair; the other, Monsieur Talbot, was like a madman! One pale, the other red, — a living antithesis. Life is full of them, as is art itself. Behind the two men, equally agitated, appeared the perplexed faces of the actors and actresses who composed our improvised troupe.

"Well, well, what's the matter?" I cried, divining some disaster, — I have experienced so many on my travels.

"The matter?" said Courtillier; "the matter is that Monsieur Talbot's box of costumes has n't arrived!"

"They have probably sent it somewhere else than to Compiègne!" said Monsieur Talbot.

"There's evidently a mistake somewhere!"

"Perhaps the box is at Saint-Quentin!"

"The Comédie-Française costume! My costume," said Monsieur Talbot. "And if I don't have my costume, why, I simply don't play!"

"But what about the money?" interposed Courtillier. "There's been some money taken in advance!"

"The money can be returned," replied Talbot, firmly.

To return money is always a disagreeable necessity. The features of my comrades, men and women, expressed, at that prospect, a feeling very far removed from joy. But how could we soothe Monsieur Talbot? His carefully studied costume made a part of

his conception of the rôle. He could not be Louis XI. without the fur cape and the legendary hat adorned with images and medals from Notre-Dame d'Embrun. To tell the truth, monsieur, heartsick as I was at the thought of losing my share of the receipts, I could not blame a dramatic artist, a successful actor, a professor, for that excess of conscientiousness.

And yet I felt that it was a most deplorable thing to return the money, — absolutely deplorable.

"But you must know Louis XI.," said Capécure, who played Coitier, to me.

Did I know Louis XI.? I knew the whole of Casimir Delavigne as I know my whole repertory.

"Tell Courtillier that you'll play it."

"You're joking! What about Monsieur Talbot?"

Monsieur Talbot was still justified in hoping that the costumes would arrive in time. Courtillier was studying the time-tables. He discovered that there was a train that left Paris at 4.50, and reached Compiègne at 6.19, and another, a semi-express, that arrived at 9.41. That would be too late. But the train from Paris to Villers-Cotterets, train 1139, arrived at 8.12. The boxes might, yes, must reach Compiègne by train 1139.

"Telegraph! Make a row! Do the impossible," said Monsieur Talbot. "If I have n't my costume, I won't play Louis XI., and there you are!"

"You shall have your costume, my dear sir,"

replied Courtillier, trying to be calm. "Louis XI. does n't appear till Scene VII. in the *second*. We will gain time by commencing Act I. a little late. You can dress during the *entr'acte* and make your *entrée* in the *second* amid thunders of applause.

" 'Ne vous y jouez pas, comte, par la croix sainte !'

Meanwhile dinner is served. Let us dine. I will offer a toast to your success at dessert !"

I tell you, monsieur, that, despite the inevitable anxiety that assailed us, the dinner was very lively. Artists have childlike minds that do not understand danger. We were in danger, in very great danger of having to return the money that had been taken, and yet we made puns. Monsieur Talbot alone did not forget his anxiety and did not eat, and Courtillier glanced at me across the table, as if to say, "What a fix, Brichanteau !" I comforted him with a smile. I have seen many others as bad !

We took our coffee and adjourned to the theatre. I put on my Tristan costume, sharing my dressing-room with Capécure, who was painting himself for Coitier, and with Courtillier himself, who was grumbling to himself as he put on the auburn wig in which he played the Dauphin.

"You will see, that train won't bring his costume !"

Monsieur Talbot meanwhile was stalking up and down the stage, which was set for a *country scene*, the

Château of Plessis in the background, a few scattered trees at the side — and he kept saying in a sort of frenzy : —

“ If I don’t get my costume from the Comédie, I won’t act, I won’t act, I won’t act ! ”

Meanwhile the audience was impatiently calling for the curtain to rise. A very good house, to judge from a glance through a hole in the drop-curtain. Fine toilets, uniforms, and the undercurrent of enthusiasm that gives promise of a successful occasion. There are audiences of wood, and audiences of plaster of Paris. That one seemed to be of lava.

The curtain rises, and I say my first words : —

“ Thy name ? ” — a question put to Richard le Pâtre.

“ Thy name ? ”

“ Richard le Pâtre ! ”

“ Stand ; and thy dwelling ? ”

“ I have come thence but now.”

“ The king doth forbid all persons to come forth at this hour ! ”

That amounts to nothing, but it is the play. All the weight of the king’s authority should be made to appear in the grand provost’s interrogatory : “ Thy name ? ” If that is well said — and it *was* well said — the whole audience should at once anticipate something tragic. *Thy name ?* Nobody can pass, nobody can leave his home after dark. It is terrible. *Thy*

name? In those two words the hearer should at once feel the two lines that follow :

"Return, or thy friends shall see ere sinks to-morrow's sun,

The justice of the king hanging from yonder oak!"

It would be more simple perhaps to say: *Thou shalt be hanged*, but perhaps it would be a little too simple. *Thy name?* I had felt a thrill run through the audience. I had them in hand. Monsieur Talbot as Louis XI. could come now; my Tristan had smoothed the way for him. I speak only of my diction. As for my costume, I was Tristan from top to toe, — a masterly portrait.

Meanwhile Courtillier had sent old Saint-Firmin to the station with the hotel carriage. Saint-Firmin was to pounce upon the box when it arrived from Paris, tear it from the hands of the Company's agents without giving them time for reflection, and bring it back to the theatre at full speed, swifter than thought.

"If he doesn't bring it, I don't act," repeated Monsieur Talbot, determined to be consistent.

Now the *first* came to an end amid applause; there were calls for Brichanteau, although Tristan was not on at the end of the act, and it was 8.44. Train 1139 must have arrived, and the box, the blessed box, did not appear. Courtillier ran hither and thither, fuming and biting the end of the Dauphin's

wig. Suddenly there was a great outcry on the stage where we were all assembled condoling with one another.

"Saint-Firmin!"

"Well?"

"The box?"

"The costume?"

"Nothing," replied Saint-Firmin, in despair. "The box must have gone to Tergnier. They have probably sent it along to the frontier."

"Very good," chimed in Monsieur Talbot's well-known voice. "I won't play."

"But we can get up a costume."

"A costume that would n't be the costume of the Rue de Richelieu. A wretched makeshift! I won't act!"

"With an announcement —"

"I won't act!"

"Ah! but the announcement shall be made most flattering to you!"

"I won't act!"

"But the money?"

"The money! Art first of all! Art alone! I won't act!"

"Suppose the audience should consent to your acting Louis XI. in street clothes?"

"I won't act, I won't act, I won't act!"

Courtillier tore his hair, or the Dauphin's. Little

Declergy, from the Conservatory, who was to play Marie, Communes' daughter, declared that she would never sign a contract with Courtillier again, for he had made her lose a morning performance at the Élysée-Montmartre, where she would have recited monologues. The stage, monsieur, but recently devoted to manifestations of art and the Alexandrines of the poet, presented the appearance of a dismantled ship. Everybody was talking, giving his or her advice. Courtillier had taken up the time-table once more and was studying it as Bonaparte studied the map of Italy.

"Suppose we telegraph to Tergnier?"

That was an idea. But, with the best will in the world, the station agent at Tergnier, assuming that he had Monsieur Talbot's costume, could forward it only by one of three trains which reached Compiègne at 10.22, 11.17, and 2.04, respectively. What irony. Four minutes past two! Long before that, the curtain would have fallen on the last line of *Louis XI.*:

"One is king for one's people, and not for one's self."

A wretched ending, by the way. It is François de Paule who says it, and the leading man's part, the king, ought to give the cue for the curtain to fall. It does n't interfere with the recall, however, as Louis XI. is on the stage.

Ah! we were in a pretty mess, — everybody out of

his senses, except Monsieur Talbot, who was firm in the determination which tore our hearts, but which I could not blame. However, if there are duties that we owe to art, we also owe something to the public.

A sudden flash of light passed through my mind. I took Courtillier's hand.

"It is all up with us, don't you think? Monsieur Talbot won't act. The evening is thrown away. Do you want me to pull the fat out of the fire? I have so often been the *terra nova* of managers! Do you want me to play Louis XI.?"

"You, Brichanteau?"

"I know the part. I have ground at it. I am ready. I will throw myself into the water."

"Brichanteau!"

I thought at first that he was going to fall on my neck, but he hesitated.

"And Tristan? Who will play Tristan?"

"Saint-Firmin. We can make an announcement!"

"And the costume?"

"I'll get one up. I ask you for ten minutes."

"That's very long! The *entr'acte* has lasted an interminable time already."

"Five minutes then. Make an announcement."

Courtillier had one of those moments of decision which turn the tide of battle. "*Alea jacta est*,"¹ he said, as if he were still Charlemagne's

¹ The die is cast.

tutor. And he was going to find the stage-manager to tell him to strike the three blows, when I seized his wrist.

"One moment. There's one condition."

The word frightened him. He foresaw an increase of perquisites, a demand for a larger share of the profits, one of those blackmailing tricks to which some artists resort under such circumstances, making the most they can out of the *impresarii*, who generally give them as good as they send. But I have never placed money before honor.

"The condition," I said, "is, that at the end of the *fourth*, after the scene with Nemours, they shall throw me the wreath intended for Monsieur Talbot."

"True, true," said Courtillier, "there is a wreath. But it's a superb affair, that wreath!"

"A reason the more. I demand it."

"Monsieur Talbot was to play Louis XI., he does n't play Louis XI.; you were not to play Louis XI., you do play Louis XI.; you shall have Monsieur Talbot's wreath," replied Courtillier. "And now, the three blows!"

While the stage-manager struck the three blows and called out, *Attention!* as they do at the Comédie-Française, I saw Courtillier talking to Monsieur Talbot. Monsieur Talbot listened, seemed to remonstrate, apparently made some objections, then

bowed as if in assent. And the curtain rose on the throne-room at the Château of Plessis-les-Tours.

Thereupon Courtillier walked forward, bowing three times, before the now silent audience. Every one felt that there was something serious in the air ; and I heard Courtillier's voice, as I undressed in hot haste behind a screen, — doffing Tristan's costume to don that of Louis XI. Courtillier, deeply moved, was saying : —

“ Mesdames and messieurs, a genuine disaster has befallen us, — a disaster that was very near preventing the continuance of the performance.”

The audience waited in suspense. I followed its movements anxiously, I could hear its hard breathing.

“ The costume of Monsieur Talbot of the Comédie-Française has, by a most unfortunate chance, gone astray on the railway, we don't know where. At all events, it has not arrived at Compiègne, and Monsieur Talbot, always concerned for the truth and for his dignity as an artist, has informed the management that he cannot appear before the intelligent audience which kindly listens to me and bears with me, without his usual costume, the costume used at the Comédie-Française.”

A frigid silence. The spectators were wondering what Courtillier was coming at ; and Courtillier's voice trembled a little, his emotion was mastering him. Meanwhile I was saying to Saint-Firmin : “ And

the cap? Think up something for the cap and the medals, my good old Saint-Firmin. Think, think!"

"Mesdames and messieurs," continued Courtillier, "we should be altogether helpless and despairing, and compelled, notwithstanding the success of the first act, to send you home" — outcries and protests — "send you home to your own *foyers*, more comforting than ours," — Some few persons smiled at the joke, — "were it not that our worthy comrade Brichanteau, Sébastien Brichanteau, whose rare talents you have but a moment since enjoyed in the rôle of Tristan," — "*Yes / yes / that is true !*" — "were it not, I say, that our comrade Brichanteau has undertaken to relieve both the management and all his colleagues from the most cruel embarrassment by taking the part of Louis XI. without preparation." A moment of suspense. "Monsieur Sébastien Brichanteau requests from the enlightened audience he is about to face its utmost indulgence. But, encouraged by that very indulgence, he does not fear to assume a heavy responsibility, and it will be the crowning honor of his dramatic career, already a long one, to have interpreted under such delicate circumstances so difficult a rôle, — and that too, mesdames and messieurs, in the noble and artistic city of Compiègne!"

There was another pause, not very long, and I heard the hall ring with applause as I was drawing on the king's knee-breeches. I ought to say that I had

literally carried the audience by storm in the *first* with my complete, historically accurate Tristan. One voice, however, loud as a clarion, asked: —

“What about Monsieur Talbot?”

“Yes! yes!” chimed in several others. “What about Monsieur Talbot?”

But Courtillier soon reassured them. He had understood the whole bearing of the question.

“Do not believe, messieurs, that Monsieur Talbot has, for the first time in his life, proved recreant to his duty, or that the management had promised you the services of an eminent artist with whom it had made no contract. No! Monsieur Talbot is at his post. His costume alone has failed to keep its appointment. But, to prove to your satisfaction the good faith of the management and Monsieur Talbot's good-will, Monsieur Talbot will witness the performance from the proscenium box on the left, the *garden* side, as we say,” — “*Bravo!*” — “and if you have never had the good fortune to hear that excellent actor, you will at least, mesdames and messieurs, have the consolation of seeing him follow the efforts of his substitute and admirer, Monsieur Brichanteau! A rare and signal good fortune, messieurs, for the refined public of Compiègne: it will have before its eyes at one and the same time, I will not say the pupil, but the successor — and the master!”

I have heard many announcements in my time. I

have made several myself, and under circumstances as diverse as the innumerable accidents of life. But I have never heard one that was more warmly received, more loudly applauded than that! Applauded? No, let us rather say acclaimed. The curtain fell upon a perfect thunder-storm of *bravos*.

"Now your mind ought to be at ease," said Courtillier, in high good-humor.

"I have never had any fear," I replied. "That's a feeling that I don't know."

And I went on with my dressing. The effect of the announcement was such that we had a few moments before us; and then before the king's *entrée* in the *second*, there is Marie's little monologue, the scene with the Dauphin which is quite long, the *entrée* of Commynes, the scene between Commynes and his daughter, and the arrival of Nemours. Saint-Firmin could utilize the time. Ah! what a man Saint-Firmin was, monsieur! A man of resource, accustomed to all the expedients that necessity imposes upon artists in their struggle with fate and with the unexpected. It was Saint-Firmin who, on one occasion, when he was playing Ruy Gomez in *Hernani* at Lons-le-Saunier, in a theatre which had no scenery representing a portrait gallery, nothing approaching a gallery, said to the manager, "Have n't you at least a photograph album?" And, holding in one hand the album filled with photographs of the manager's

numerous family, he played the whole scene, turning over the leaves of the blessed book : —

“This is the oldest of the Silvas, the common ancestor, the great man of them all, Don Silvius ; thrice consul he at Rome.”

And he turned a leaf.

“Ruy Gomez de Silva, grand master of Saint James and Calabrana. His gigantic armor would fit our forms but ill.”

And he turned another leaf :

“I pass him by and better men than he. This consecrated head is my own father. He too was great, although the last in order.”

And he called Don Carlos's attention to another photograph.

It was an admirable piece of work, and the invention of the album is still talked about. But Saint-Firmin, monsieur, was fertile in miracles, like the days when Joad lived. Do you know what Saint-Firmin did while I was buttoning my doublet ? He made the cap of the rapacious monarch I was to represent, by tearing off the vizor of an old *képi* belonging to a chasseur of the garrison ; and for the medals with the effigy of Notre-Dame d'Embrun that Louis XI. was supposed to wear, that devil of a Saint-Firmin — on my word, he's a very Edison for a travelling company — the fellow melted, in a spoon, some lead soldiers he had bought from the con-

cierge's little one. And, after melting them and hammering them flat like medallions, he drew them through coal dust to make them look old. It was admirable, monsieur, that king's cap made from a cavalryman's *képi*, and those slugs of soldiers from Nuremberg! I arrayed myself in them and looked at myself in a hand-glass. Being admirably painted, — I have the knack of making up my own face, — I cried with assurance : —

“That's just the thing. It is King Loys XI. to the life! Philippe de Commynes would recognize him! To the curtain!”

And so when, at the end of Scene VI. which the audience found over-long because it was waiting for me, the château official announced, “The King!” I entered, monsieur, followed by Olivier le Daim, the Comte de Dreux, two citizens, and a horseman, with no more emotion than if I had continued to act Tristan. I attacked Scene VII. in an energetic, awe-inspiring voice : —

“Be not deceived, count; by the Holy Cross!

If but one murmur, one complaint, doth reach my ear,
I lay my hand on you, and, when my doubts are cleared
away,

I'll send you hence to God to look for pardon!”

I had not finished the last line, when a thunder of applause drowned my voice. I glanced at Monsieur Talbot in his proscenium box. He nodded approv-

ingly, but his face was pale. And the whole performance was marked by the same spontaneous enthusiasm and touching unanimity. I felt that I was borne on toward success by a wave of sympathy, which, if I may so express it, formed the synthesis of all classes in the city of Compiègne. The army, which I saw was represented by the garrison staff, the magistracy, the literary bourgeoisie, the women, and even the common people, whose taste is instinctive and far-reaching, united to second me in my task. There was a sort of communion, — how shall I express myself? — a collaboration between the audience and myself to impart to that extemporaneous creation of Louis XI. a definitive value.

Ah ! monsieur, I passed two delightful hours there, which paid me for many mortifications. Without preparation, to play without preparation a rôle that Ligier had worked over, and that, too, under Monsieur Talbot's eye ! It was a dream I should have declared impossible of realization, even on the morning of that unforgettable day in February ! February 23d ! The date is written here, in my head and in my heart !

Recalled once after the *second*, with Saint-Firmin, who succeeded me as Tristan, — once after the *third*, — twice after the *fourth*, in which I rushed off the stage in fine style, muttering inarticulate sounds, as the text demands, I was recalled thrice after the *fifth* ;

and Monsieur Talbot witnessed this spectacle: the wreath, a magnificent wreath intended for him, falling at my feet. I can see it still in all its fresh beauty, that wreath of violets and roses, tied with a tri-colored ribbon, which still hangs in my room, a palpable souvenir of the 23d of February! On one of the ribbons were these words in letters of gold, words that made me thrill with emotion: *To the incomparable artist!* I picked up the wreath quickly with an agitated gesture — like a poet at the Olympic games; and condensing all my emotion and all my gratitude in expressive pantomime, I put it to my lips, then pressed it against my heart.

It was of embarrassing size, was the wreath, but the compliment was the more noteworthy. The audience, when they saw my profoundly agitated pantomime, were seized with a sort of delirium. They cried and stamped and shouted my name until the arches of the theatre rang:—

“Brichanteau! Bravo, Brichanteau! Brichanteau! Brichanteau!”

That name, repeated thus by enthusiastic lips, seemed to me unexpectedly sonorous and grand. But I retained my tranquillity in face of that hall that seemed on the point of falling about our heads. Courtillier was waiting for me in the wings to embrace me and call me his savior! Even Monsieur Talbot himself, when the curtain fell, came and con-

gratulated me, accompanied by a friend of his, a famous druggist of Compiègne. The latter, being addicted to psychology in his leisure moments, invited me to breakfast with him the next day, being desirous, he said, to analyze the sensations I had felt during that memorable evening. But I was in haste to steep myself in solitude. I returned to the hotel, with my ears still ringing with the uproar and the *bravos*, and I was lulled to sleep by their murmur, as by the echo of the waves of the sea. A blissful night, peopled with phantoms of glory.

For it was glory, monsieur, absolute glory. The next day, when I went down to the common room, those of my comrades who had not taken the earliest train saluted me with repeated acclamations : —

“Vive Brichanteau ! Bravo, Louis XI. !”

And Courtillier was gentlemanly enough to ask me what he owed me for having saved the company, honor and money.

“What would I like ? The privilege of passing a few days at Compiègne, so that I can visit the Château of Pierrefonds and drink my fill of the Middle Ages, to my mind the ideal epoch !”

Courtillier did not hesitate ; he paid for my room at the hotel and my meals for three days, and secretly handed me a hundred-franc note in an envelope. Then, his troupe having returned, I, being left alone with my thoughts, lived amid those artistic surround-

ings — passing my time between Compiègne and Pierrefonds — three full days, saluted in the streets by the authorities of the city, and returning courteous salutations without number on every side, but seeking by preference unfrequented corners, to meditate upon my renown and to recite poetry !

A reporter for a local newspaper was the only one who disturbed my blissful retirement ; he asked me to give him some biographical details concerning myself, but I replied : —

“I am simply a passer-by, monsieur. And what interest has the public in the life of an artist? The important thing is his work. Did I play Louis XI. well or ill? That is the whole question. My rôles are yours, my life is my own !”

The reporter was not content. He made that apparent in his paper. But for every triumph there must be a share of criticism, I will not say of insult. I had my share. My triumph was complete.

On the third day I left the hotel on foot, having around my body, like a scarf, the wreath of flowers which had perfumed my room, the tri-colored ribbons fluttering in the wind. Thus amid kindly glances from the people, did I leave Compiègne, with my valise in my hand, and my wreath worn bandolier-wise. Not a shout as I walked along, but amiable salutations and indulgent smiles. I walked through the city in an atmosphere of sympathy.

At the station they asked me if I would n't put my wreath with the luggage; it was too large for the netting-racks in the carriages.

"No," I replied; "there are emblems from which one does not like to be separated. I will take my wreath across my knees!"

As the train started, the railway employés and some lovers of the drama who stood upon the platform gave me a parting salute. I heard one last cheer, and I even distinguished an *Au revoir!* that went to my heart.

It was done. The locomotive bore me away toward the great city. But I had, stored away in my memory, an imperishable souvenir, and in my hours of despair I look at the faded wreath bearing the date, sacred to me, of the 23d February, and I say to myself: —

"No weakness, Brichanteau! Struggle on, Brichanteau! You have had your hour! You have had your day! Never forget Compiègne, and take heart, Brichanteau! Remember Louis XI.! No one ever acted it as you did — no one!"

Ah! I forgot — and yet it is flattering to me; an art collector, bibliophile, and numismatist has kept to this day the chasseur's *képi*, adorned with the medallions made from lead soldiers. It is an additional testimony to my success. And if you have any curiosity to see the headgear worn by Louis XI., look

up the secretary of the Archæological Society as you pass through Compiègne; he will show it to you hanging between a Roman soldier's helmet and the tri-colored helmet of a French guardsman. Documents for use in writing the history of the *coiffure*!

But for my part I prefer to the *képi*, historical though it be, my old faded wreath, an image of the artist's life, — flowers and dust! Let us be philosophers, after all! I know more ambitious men than I who have not had their great day as I have.

V.

THE EMPEROR WAS OURS!

WELL, yes, I nearly saved France! It is a matter of history. The late Monsieur le Baron Taylor, who knew all about the affair, could have vouched for the truth of what I am about to tell you. But I have no need of witnesses to induce belief in my word. Everybody knows Brichanteau; he has never lied. My life may seem an extraordinary one, but the fact is that life is a dream, as has been said by — by — that Spaniard. Well, then, this is how it happened.

It was in the last days of the siege. Life was terribly wearisome in Paris. September, October, November, December, January, those months seemed like years. At first, people said: "Patience, we are going to be relieved, we shall crush the enemy under our walls, the North is bestirring itself, the South is rising, it is only a matter of a few weeks; we can surely give credit to the country, — the country is doing well, it is being born again!" But the days passed, nothing came; we could not leave the city, we became mere snails on the ramparts, we were horribly bored — there is no other word for it, we were bored to death.

But with great dignity, eating little and that unfit to eat, atrocious bread, horseflesh, refuse. And with it all the small-pox and the cold. There is no use talking, it was not cheerful. I did my duty like the others, you understand. I mounted guard in my turn, I passed nights on guard, and when the battalion marched out of the fortifications, ah, messeigneurs, I thought that my *chassepot* was going to open the road to Berlin and the King of Prussia had best look to himself!

I ought to say that I had declined all civil appointments at the beginning of the siege. I had friends among the authorities. Potel, the singer at the Opéra-Comique — I can see him now, with his *képi* adorned with a tri-colored ribbon — had said to me, "Do you want to join the Vigilance Committee of the tenth arrondissement?" He knew me; I had been a supernumerary at his side, and had acted at Laon with him. I refused all his offers. The ramparts were the place for vigilance; I would go to the ramparts. And then, too, I have always kept out of reach of politics. Yes, my artistic and private life is free from all compromising entanglements in that direction. What I had been, that I proposed to remain. I simply placed all my art, all the vigorous force of my talent, at the service of performances given for the wounded, or for the regimental relief funds.

Often, too often, my assistance was declined on

the pretext that the very long programme was already made up ; but I did not force my services upon any one. One evening during the bombardment I recited poetry in the *Salle des Menus-Plaisirs*, between Monsieur Delaunay and Madame Favart, and I will not tell you who received the most applause. No, I will not tell you, I am modest. However, I attribute all the honor to the poet. I had recited Victor Hugo.

In spite of everything, I was bored. Yes, the siege had the same effect on me as a play that dragged. I said to myself, "What I need is action!" We had reached the fourth act. We divined that the dénouement, happy or unhappy, was at hand, and it dragged, oh ! how that fourth act dragged ! And I cudgelled my brains, saying to myself again and again : "Come, there must be something to be done ! The genius of France is not exhausted !" Like everybody else, I had tried to think up something that might be useful to the country. How to relieve Paris, — that was the problem. My comrade Andrési, of the Bouffes, proposed that we should manufacture poisoned rings, each with an imperceptible needle-point. Every Parisian woman would wear her patriotic ring, and, if the Prussians entered Paris, every Parisian woman would shake hands with a German. And the little needle would prick the skin, the deadly poison would do its work. How many women were there in Paris ? The number could easily

be calculated. Very good ! there would be just so many Germans less in the German army.

Another friend of mine, Dubarol of the Porte-Saint-Martin, said to me : " An axe, a knife, a *navaja*, a *lasso* ; yes, Brichanteau, a Mexican *lasso* such as you use in the *Pirates of the Savane*," — the idea was not a new one to me, as you know, — " and let them send us out against the Germans, breast to breast, eye to eye ! " It was Dubarol again who suggested turning all the wild beasts in the Jardin des Plantes loose upon the Prussian advance guard. As we could not feed them, we should in that way gain a twofold advantage ; the beasts would no longer consume food in Paris, and they would consume Prussians in the suburbs. The Administration, always prudent, deemed the project too extraordinary !

I too, I must admit, disapproved of a project, bold beyond question, but decidedly unpractical. I was still saying to myself that there was certainly " something else to be done," when a cutting from a provincial newspaper, which reached Paris by balloon, stirred within me all the conjoined fibres of patriotism and of art. A man of heart, a Frenchman living at Buenos-Ayres, had raised a gallant legion, the Argentine legion, to come to France and defend his natal soil ; and the brave fellows had just landed at Bordeaux, where their leader, an ex-subaltern in the army of Africa, ex-colonel in the army of General

Lee during the War of Secession, was drilling and organizing them. He proposed, with them, to join Bourbaki's army, which was still intact. But the thing that impressed me in the news contained in the *Victoire* newspaper of Bordeaux, the thing that stirred my imagination, always in love with the picturesque, was this: the ex-colonel, being unable to procure the uniforms that he desired for his command ready made when they disembarked, had purchased the costumes of a theatrical manager who was called upon for compulsory military service, — among others those of *Les Trois Mousquetaires*; and he himself, insanely, I grant you, but heroically, you must admit, was about to defy the bullets of the Dreyse muskets in the hat and riding-coat of D'Artagnan.

Ah! that newspaper cutting! The possibility of realizing a chimerical vision, of being one of Dumas' *mousquetaires*, not only between the wings and in front of a canvas background, but in the open air, in a real battle! To protect our country, arrayed in the felt hat and plume of the defenders of the Saint-Gervais bastion! To live in peril, wearing the costume of a dream! The thought intoxicated me, it went to my brain, it drove me mad. I conceived a loathing for my black trousers with the red stripe, my broadcloth jacket, my laced hat, my woollen girdle; I fancied myself, sword in hand, cleaving helmets, and I determined, oh! I determined, by hook or crook, despite

closed gates, despite the blockade, despite Monsieur de Bismarck, despite the devil, despite everything, to go to Bordeaux and join the red-coated legion from Buenos-Ayres !

When a man with a will like mine has an idea, he puts it into execution. To go from Paris to Bordeaux was no easy matter. But I would find my way out of Paris ; I would play the part of a peasant as far as Rouen, a market-gardener returning to his village, and so I would reach Havre, — the Germans were not in possession of Havre, — and go thence to Bordeaux by sea ; I would make my escape by the valley of the Seine. In the main it was the plan, the famous plan, of Trochu, over which people made so merry, and which the governor did not undertake to carry out because, instead of operating upon Rouen, the Tours authorities decided to operate upon Orléans. That is an historical fact which will come to light later. I give it to you by the way.

To cut the matter short, my plan was a good one. Ought I to intrust it to any one ? That was a question that I put to myself, and, after all, as long as I intended to go, it was quite as well to turn my departure to some good use. The government, which sent out information and instructions by balloon, might have some mission to intrust to a sure man. Through an influential colleague, a *sociétaire* of the Comédie-Française, I sent word to a member of the

government that I was ready to pass through the lines and to carry to any desired point a written or verbal order, whichever they chose.

My influential colleague went so far as to present me to the chief of staff of the Governor of Paris, who looked me over—I standing as erect under his soldierly glance as I would have done before the enemy's bullets—and said to me:—

“Your mind is made up, my boy?”

“Fully made up, general. I am stifling in Paris. I propose to fight in the provinces.”

“Yes, you dream of a breath of fresh air. You don't want very much. We are all quartered in the same inn. And you would undertake to carry a message to the governor at Tours?”

“Yes, general, if I am not killed on the road!”

“But suppose you are the bearer of a message in writing, and you are arrested?”

“I will swallow the message in writing. That is the *a b c* of the trade.”

“And suppose you are questioned?”

“I will not say a word. I have played that part in *Masséna*, or *L'Enfant Chéri de la Victoire*.”

“Oh! but there are ways of making people speak!”

“Not a word should pass my lips, general, though they should put me to the torture. There are certain secrets that die with some men. I will remember

Coconnas in *La Reine Margot*. It is a sympathetic rôle. I came near creating it at Montparnasse."

Faith, it seems that I inspired confidence in the chief of staff. He bade me return to the Place the next day. I returned with military promptness. They gave me my credentials to the government at Tours on a little paper no bigger than that, written very fine ; and they handed me, with a despatch in cipher, a passport for the French outposts. The general informed me that, all the information obtainable about me being satisfactory, they had decided to intrust to me the mission that I solicited. If I succeeded in reaching Tours, I was to deliver my credentials and my despatch, and the government there was, it seems, instructed to reward me.

"Oh ! general," I said hastily, when the subject of reward was mentioned, "let us not mention that, I beg of you. I am sufficiently rewarded by your confidence and your esteem."

"Very well. But have you money in your pocket for the journey?"

"I have, general. Base metal is not the patriot's viaticum."

The general smiled at that phrase, which came quite naturally to my lips and which I have never forgotten. Then he wished me *bon voyage*. I had not dared to say to him that if I rendered the country the service that was expected of me, there

was a reward, craved by many gallant men, which would have made me mad with pride. But not only did I not dare to mention it, I dared not even think of it. Decorated! I, Brichanteau, a chevalier of the Legion of Honor! It would have been too much. No, seriously, I can honestly say that I did not even think of it. I thought only of escaping, of passing through the lines, of obtaining a breath of fresh air, as the general had said, and of joining the legion of *mousquetaires* from Buenos-Ayres.

Now, in what direction should I go? which gate should I choose? Toward Vincennes I knew the road like my own pocket: Nogent, Joinville, Champigny. But I should fall into the middle of the Prussian lines, and I should have to make a long *détour* to go westward. By Saint-Denis it was no more promising. The easiest and at the same time the most direct road was through the suburbs of Mont-Valérien, Saint-Cloud, the forest of Ville-d'Avray, Viroflay, and then the road to Normandie, in God's keeping! But ought I to start at night? Ought I to start by day? Questions that made my heart beat fast, — not with fear, no, but with hope. At night I risked being taken by some prowler, or *brought down* by a sentinel, it might be a Frenchman. By day I could play my rôle of peasant more easily and see danger approaching. All right, I would start in the daytime.

I had arranged for myself a very simple costume of a worthy rustic who had taken refuge in Paris. Nothing grotesque, not the *café-concert* peasant who sings at Jean-Pierre's wedding; not a *Brasseur* rôle either. A realistic peasant, close-shaven chin, cloth jacket, blouse with a blue-black cape and melon-shaped hat. With the rest, a stout stick for marauders, because there was no sense in being armed against the Prussian. My conscience was my weapon.

Off at last. I carried my passport, and, rolled up like two balls of dough in my pocket, my despatch and my credentials to the authorities at Tours. I left neither love nor relations in Paris, so that my heart, as it happened, was free; and even if I had been in love, I would have sacrificed that attachment, caprice, or passion to the prospect of making myself useful to my country and of fighting with the Argentine *mousquetaires*.

I left the city by the Neuilly gate. Beautiful weather favored my journey, which I began with a self-assured demeanor. Mont-Valérien, which was firing from time to time, seemed to salute my departure as if I were a ship. The winter sun, the smoke from the cannon floating in the clear air, all seemed to me of good augury, and I walked on, deliberately, not allowing my emotions to be stirred even by the lamentable spectacle of war, — trees felled,

houses gutted, walls rased to the ground, — which I met at every step. It was for the purpose of avenging and repairing this destruction that I walked straight ahead, bound on an important mission !

Everything went well as I passed through the dismantled suburb, until I had passed our outposts on the Sèvres road. I remember the last warning word of the officer of the flying column, when I showed him my passport, which he kept, as I had no further use for it.

“You know *they* are not far away ! How are you going to cross the Seine ? Beware : it rains bullets !”

How was I going to cross the Seine ? Upon my word I had no idea. By swimming ? Impossible. Once on the other side, I must apply to the Germans for a chance to dry my clothes. It was not probable that I could find a boat in some creek or other. I walked along the river, crouching as best I could behind the leafless trees and shrubbery, and I said to myself that I should probably have to return as I came, the very first day. I was hungry. I sat down at the foot of a birch and ate some bread — siege bread — washed down with wine from my flask. It was delicious, that repast in the open air ! I said to myself : “If the Parisians were here, how happy they would be ! They would be free !”

No, not so free as they might be ! The Seine was there, quite as effective as a wall, and I watched it

flowing in the sunlight. It reflected the houses on the other bank, where there were, perhaps, where there certainly were Prussians. But I could not see them. They were inside, smoking or reading or playing cards. At one time I heard, far away, very far away, a refrain from an operetta, an Offenbach air that was wafted to my ears through the branches. It was one of them playing *La Belle Hélène* on a piano which they had not yet burned for firewood.

And if you knew how melancholy that refrain from Offenbach sounded to me at that moment! I had heard it sung not long before at the Théâtre de Mourmelon, before our poor soldiers, formerly so gay and reckless! Ah! to avenge them, them also, in the red coat of a *mousquetaire*! That thought restored all my confidence, and I waited for nightfall, saying to myself, as in *Victorine*, that the night brings counsel.

Night came in due time, very cold, — luckily quite dark, even after the beautiful day, — and I shivered infernally on the bank. I even deliberated whether I had not better fall back on our outposts and get under cover until daylight. But that would have reminded me of the *retreat in good order* which we are constantly hearing about in bulletins, and, as I was near my goal, I must remain there. It was well for me that I came to that decision, for it is probable that, if I had retraced my steps toward Paris, the

rain of bullets would have been a French shower, and who knows, monsieur, if I should be here?

I said to myself: "I will remain, I will wait!" And I longed to stamp on the ground to warm myself, but I was afraid of making a noise. The better plan was to look along the river for some hovel where I could lie until daybreak; and as it turned out, while I was looking for the hovel, I found the boat and the ferryman who carried me to the other bank.

It was like this. I had discovered, from a distance, something very high, like a wall, with something ragged and full of holes on top, like a roof riddled with shells; a sort of shed it was, and I said to myself: "That's just what I want for a nap;" but, as I was going in, I heard somebody, whom I could not see, moving near me, then a voice growled in French:—

"Who goes there?"

I replied, instinctively:—

"France!"

I should have made the same reply, on my word of honor, if the question had been, "*Wer da?*"

The person on the ground approached. He was some vagabond or other who came at night to try and catch fish, in order to sell them the next day at an exorbitant price at the Halle or at Brébant's,—one of the Redskins of civilization, who live on everything and nothing, and would find a silk thread

in an egg. There in that shed, under a pile of bricks and straw, he had an old skiff that he used on occasion, at the risk of receiving ten bullets in his head for one. I learned all this by talking with him, at a safe distance, my staff in my hand ; for, to tell the truth, he seemed to be a famous rascal, did my new friend !

Rascal or not, he was brave ! He agreed to set me across the river for ten francs. That was not a high price to pay. The least sound of oars might arouse the Germans, and the whole shore would have taken fire. But nothing venture, nothing have. I poured out a glass of wine for my ferryman, which he clinked against my flask, and we drank to France, — for perhaps the rascal was a good sort of fellow, after all, — and off we went.

Behold us in the skiff.

Not a star. I thought of Mordaunt aboard his boat in the fifth act of *Vingt Ans Après*. I said to myself that we must cast Chinese shadows against the clearer background of the water, and I expected, every moment, to receive a volley. I had my two rolls of paper between my fingers, ready to be swallowed, if I had time, before the death agony.

But there is a God. Not a shot. *They*, the Germans, were sound asleep.

My boatman deposited me on the bank.

I gave him twelve francs — two francs *pourboire* — and said to him : —

"At least let me know the name of the stranger who has assisted me in my flight."

"What's my name to you?" he replied. "My name is Auguste!"

Whatever he may have been, I have kept that baptismal name, Auguste, engraven on my heart, and I associate it with my most heroic memory. Wherever thou art, Auguste, if thou still livest, my blessing on thee!

I was on the other side of the river, but I was not at the end of my troubles. I repeated the words of Rysoor, — there's a part that I would like to act, a fine Dumaine! — *No, the trouble is not finished, it is but beginning!* And I felt that I was in the enemy's country. The darkness, the night, the silence, everything seemed hostile to me. The simplest plan was not to stir. When day broke, I would find my road. And I kept myself out of sight, cowering in a ditch on the hard ice, frozen stiff, — absolutely frozen.

With the first ray of dawn I began to walk, to drive away the numbness, to bring the blood back to my feet. I had a sort of rush of blood to my brain. I was walking straight ahead, not at random, for I knew the roads, I was walking toward Saint-Germain, when suddenly — oh! my odyssey was not of long duration! — I walked straight into a German patrol as if I had banged my head against a closed door.

Ah! it was no longer the *Qui vive?* of my friend

Auguste. I heard the dreaded *Wer da ?* The crossed muskets stopped me short. A corporal asked me something in German. As I made no reply, a soldier pushed me behind, and I was taken, surrounded by tall, red-bearded devils, before a very light, very thin officer, who, as he stared at me through a monocle, seemed to me to be very tired, either because he had risen so early, or because he had passed the night in the little cottage where he was warming his boots, by the light of a kerosene lamp still lighted.

The officer spoke French very well, with a very slight accent that vaguely resembled the Gascon accent. He asked me what I was doing in the German lines, and where I came from.

I replied concisely : —

“From Paris.”

“What, from Paris? You have undertaken to escape from a besieged city?”

Thereupon I summoned all my skill in the matter of make-up and, if I do say it, I acted the Norman peasant as he has rarely been acted on the stage. I felt that it was an excellent performance. I was in the good fellow's skin, — a Bouffé or a Paulin Ménier.

Have I told you, by the way, that while the red-beards were escorting me to the cottage I had deftly swallowed the two balls of paper intended for the authorities at Tours? That is the alphabet of the

juggler's art. Pass, *muscades* ! And the Germans had seen nothing ! I said to myself : —

“Farewell to your despatch, Brichanteau ! Even if you reach Tours, my boy, you will not receive the reward you have dreamed of !”

But I added that, after all, I might, even without the papers, which by the way had nearly strangled me, like over-large pills, furnish sufficient information for them to recognize my zeal.

And then, too, I had not set out in search of compliments, but of blows. I wanted to fight ! To fight in the costume of D'Artagnan. The rest was incidental.

“Why did you leave Paris ?” the officer asked me in a satirical tone.

“Because I was tired of staying there.”

“Ah ! then you're not a Parisian ?”

“No, officer ; *I was* a poor farmer in the outskirts of Rouen — at Saint-Pierre ; I don't know if you know Saint-Pierre ?”

“No, I don't know it.”

“Well, that's where my people are. I took refuge in Paris, or I should say I had business there, grain to sell, and I was shut up there when the siege began. At first I says to myself : ‘Pshaw ! this won't last long ! They'll raise the siege,’ ” — the officer smiled as if I had said an absurd thing ; — “but, you see, they did n't do it, and it seemed as if I could n't stand it,

to stay there without seeing my people ; so I came out, yes, I came out, that's the truth, preferring to risk everything rather than stay shut up there like my hens in the hencoop. And that's the good God's true truth, officer ! ”

As I told you, I played my part admirably, although peasants, the second comedian's parts, like Alain in *L'École des Femmes*, are not in my line. But I have played many other parts that were not in my line ! The gesture, the accent, the curl of the lip, everything was there, and the tall, thin officer stared into the whites of my eyes while I was talking my patois to him. That stare would have confused me if I had been on the stage, although I am not easily put out of countenance. The fellow magnetized me !

But, pshaw ! I was master of myself, and I determined to bewilder him with *dames* and *bédames* !

“ Look you, peasant, are n't you an emissary (*émis-saire*) of the government of Paris ? ” inquired the officer finally.

I made this reflection : “ Brichanteau, if you understand the word *émis-saire*, you are lost.”

I stammered and stuttered : —

“ *Émi — émis — père —* What was that word, officer ? ”

“ *Émis-saire ?* Spy, if you prefer.”

“ Spy ? me ! Ah ! *bon Dieu de bon Dieu !* me, a spy ! Spy on who ? spy on what ? ”

"In the first place, what's your name?"

"Bonnin, Jean-Marie."

The officer wrote the name on his note-book.

That name suddenly came to my lips in memory of *François le Champi* and Madame Sand, who saw me play *Claudie* at La Châtre. Jean Bonnin! I shall never forget it.

"You were born?"

"At Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray, the 3d December, 1830."

"Good. We will keep you and see what the inquiry will bring forth."

He made a sign to his soldiers; they took me by the shoulders once more and carried me to a vile barrack, where they locked me up and kept me in sight, without food or drink. I must have remained there from five or six o'clock in the morning until noon, something like that, when the door of my barrack opened and a great longshanks of a German growled at me, "Come!" and with a gesture bade me follow him.

A detachment was waiting at the door.

I glanced instinctively at the Dreyse muskets. I said to myself: "Oho! suppose they are loaded for you, my old Brichanteau!"

The squad escorted me through divers streets to a large dwelling-house, in front of which a whole general's staff was parading up and down, dragging their

swords behind them. There were hussar officers all in blue, others all in red, and old officers, whom by their helmets and their plumes I knew to be generals. One of them, a beggarly little fellow, with spectacles and not a hair of beard, looked me over when they led me before him, and the villain said to me abruptly, without a trace of accentuation : —

“ You come from Paris ? ”

“ Yes, I come from Paris.”

“ You were a bearer of despatches ? ”

“ I, good God ! I was bearer of nothing at all.”

“ Where are your despatches ? ”

“ Ah ! *dame bédame*, if you look for them you'll waste your time like the devil. I'm a poor man who escaped from Paris because he wants to see his wife and his little ones and the old folks. *Voilà !* ”

“ You are married ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You have children ? ”

“ Three.”

Perhaps it was not a lie. One never can tell !

“ And your name is Bonnin, born — ”

“ At Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray, the 3d December, 1830. Bonnin, Jean-Marie, son of Bonnin, Pierre-Lavinien.”

“ Enough ! ” said the little old man.

He turned to his officers ; they whispered together for a moment, and a little red hussar, all bedecked

with gold lace, left the group and made a sign to the squad that had brought me thither, whereupon it drew up in front of me.

The whole staff looked on.

They motioned to me to take up my position in front of a wall which, in the bright sunlight, looked perfectly white—like a winding-sheet. The devil! that had a bad look. The curious part of it is that I noticed everything.

I knew where I was.

At Rueil. I had noticed the house particularly one day when I had come to Rueil to recite poetry at a concert for the benefit of the municipal Fanfare. I recognized the street. I saw the distant landscape and, through the clear air, Mont-Valérien, thundering away, with its little columns of smoke floating upward.

And behind it I fancied that I could see Paris,—Rue de Bondy where my lodgings were, the Porte-Saint-Martin, the Gaiété, the Châtelet, the Conservatory from which I had graduated, the Comédie-Française, where I ought to have been engaged!—my whole life! And it was all ended! These men in high boots, wrapped in their cloaks, with heavy pie-shaped helmets on their heads, were going to finish it all up, and adieu, Brichanteau! Curtain! The lights are going out.

The staff did not stir. A subaltern planted me in front of the wall, facing the squad, and the tall, thin

devil of an officer who had questioned me in the morning—I did not know he was there—made his appearance and drew his sword.

“Prepare arms !”

I am not quite sure if that was what he said, but I think so. However I distinctly heard the word *arms*, which he pronounced with an *h* before it: *harms* !—how that would have made my teacher, Monsieur Beauvallet, squirm !

I folded my arms like Laferrière in *La Barrière de Cléchy*, or Monsieur Alexandre in *Les Cosaques*.

The little gold-bespangled red hussar came toward me and very courteously asked me this question :—

“His Excellency the general asks you if you have no disclosure to make.”

“Nothing,” I replied.

“You have nothing to say? Nothing?”

An idea came into my mind, a wild temptation. I longed to show those swashbucklers what a dramatic artist’s soul really is, and I felt that I was on the point of replying :—

“I have to say that I die for my country,” and shouting : “*Vive la France !*”

It was the only reply for a man who wants to die. But why die? And, if I had yielded to that natural but heroic impulse, I should have ceased to be Jean-Marie Bonnin, Norman peasant, and have become Sébastien Brichanteau once more; but I should

have had a dozen bullets in my brain or my breast-bone.

I had the courage to reply : —

“ *Dame*, I have to say that I wish you'd send word if you can to my wife and Père Bonnin at Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray that I wanted to kiss my children and it brought me bad luck ! That's all ! ”

The pretty red hussar went back to the little old general. My officer of the morning still held his sword in the air. The soldiers had their guns ready. A charming tableau. But I said to myself : “ When he lowers his sword, the beast, it will be very nice ! ” And I already imagined the tall, white, sunlight-mottled wall spattered with my blood. One has curious ideas at such moments.

Then I thought : —

“ You will not join the Buenos-Ayres legion, Brichanteau, and you will never, never enter the Comédie-Française ! ”

That disgusted me. Suddenly the little hussar, after talking with his general, returned to the officer commanding the squad, and I saw — I half saw, for all this going and coming was beginning to make my head and my eyes rather dizzy — the soldiers *grounding harms* ! The general stepping toward me, stared at me again through his spectacles, then he and his staff all turned their backs on me.

Thereupon the red hussar, always polite, said to me :

"You're not afraid. You are to be taken to Versailles. Your affair is worth the trouble of being looked into."

"My affair!"

"To be sure. For all we know, you're a dangerous fellow. We shall see how that is!"

For my part, I saw but one thing. I had escaped the squad of execution for the moment and destiny led me back after many hardships to Versailles, my native place, where, thank God! I had left too few reminders and acquaintances for any one to recognize in Jean Bonnin, Norman peasant — second comedian — little Sébastien who played hop-scotch on Avenue de Paris, or the young Brichanteau who made his début in *Horace* on the boards of the theatre of his native town. It was so long ago! — 1849! Think of it!

And there I was! The staff had gone, the squad was going, and they bestowed me once more in my hovel. I uttered an *ouf!* as in a fifth act, when the young girl or the mother or the kind magistrate brings the pardon of the condemned man. And I said to myself that such excitement makes a horrible void in a man, and that I would eat a morsel. On that point the Germans were very cautious. Bread and water. A little sausage. My first banquet did not ruin them, and the expense of keeping me did not necessitate an inroad on their war treasure. But a man fresh

from Paris was not likely to be exacting, and that food seemed to me worthy of the Maison-d'Or. Never, no, never have I eaten with better appetite.

I passed the night in that dog kennel, and the next day, with cords about my wrists, like Lesurques in the last tableau of the *Courrier de Lyon*, I started for Versailles on foot. I had the pleasure of espying the palace from afar. I saw that the streets and avenues of my poor great city were swarming with pointed helmets, and I was taken to the prison, where I have been so many times when a child, to watch the condemned men come out, and gazed at the door, the great nails, the heavy knocker, never suspecting that the day would come — but let us be philosophers, everything comes to pass.

And it was there, in the prison at Versailles, that I conceived a plan which, if it had succeeded — and it might have succeeded — would perhaps have saved our country, and would in any event — I say it boldly — have changed the course of history.

I say this, and I will prove it. This is the story.

In the first place they threw me into a dungeon like a cell in a cloister. Good. I knew all about dungeons. I had played Buridan and Latude. I had heard bolts shoot and had seen the sinister faces of jailers appear in doorways. But in the prison at Versailles the bolts were not put on by stage carpenters, and the massive door bore little resemblance

to the doors of painted canvas. The jailer was a subaltern officer in the German gendarmerie, and from time to time I was taken before some stipendiary of the provostry, who tried to make me confess that my name was not Jean Bonnin, that I was not a Norman from Normandie, and that I had left Paris with "evil designs." So did they qualify my patriotic purposes.

But King William's provosts exerted their cunning to no purpose ; they did not succeed in making me forget the part I was playing. I was Jean Bonnin from top to toe, and, *bédame*, I thought of nothing but getting back to my province, and I laughed well — *jarnigué* — at the Parisians who persisted in firing cannon to prevent my sleeping at night.

After a few days my *cellular* imprisonment ceased. They allowed me to walk for two hours daily in a sort of courtyard with other prisoners, all French. There were soldiers there, and thieves, a little of everything, a curious collection of people picked up here and there around Paris by the German authorities : poachers suspected of having fired at an Uhlan by moonlight ; freebooters who pretended to be deserters, and who had, perhaps, like myself, been intrusted with a commission by General Trochu. Poor devils, locked up they hardly knew why, because they were prowling about homeless, picking up cabbages and greens in the outskirts of Paris. Gardeners

from Seine-et-Oise, some old soldiers of the Crimea, who had made insolent replies to the questions of the conquerors, — everybody raging against the Prussians, growling, and picketed there like a herd of angry beasts. In all, thirty or forty individuals, — thirty-seven, to be exact, — young and old, but *gars*, I promise you.

And the herd assembled twice a day, taking the air between four walls, under the surveillance of sentinels with loaded guns. We heard the cannon on Mont-Valérien, the crackling of musketry, and sometimes, when the noise seemed to come nearer, we would look at one another, saying in undertones :

“ *They* are leaving the city ! *They* are coming ! ”

In Paris when we said *they*, we meant the Prussians. Outside of Paris *they* were the French.

The days passed, however, and the weeks, and *they* did not come. We had ended by becoming pretty thoroughly acquainted with one another, meeting as we did at stated hours. Sometimes one of us was missing at the promenade. Then we would ask the sentinel, in stumbling German, what had become of our comrade. No reply. Perhaps they had sent him to Germany, to Spandau, to the devil, or God knows where ; perhaps they had shot him, against a wall or at the corner of a wood. That might happen to any one of us one of those fine mornings. But, strangely enough, as soon as one had gone another appeared.

They would bring us some French prisoner who had rebelled, some newly caught marauder, and there were always just thirty-seven of us, by chance, I think. If we had risen to forty, we would have made a cross and imagined we were at the Academy.

Thirty-seven stanch men, all with fire in their eyes, tired of being behind bolts, annoyed at having eaters of sauerkraut for jailers, tired of hearing cannon-shots and musket-shots in the distance without fighting, — even thirty-seven men are something ; and I said to myself that they might be put to some use, and that the *mousquetaires* were only four when they shook the world.

Fate seemed to have pointed out my duty to me by allotting to me, a child of Versailles, a dungeon in my native city. I knew that the prison in which I was eating the bread of captivity was situated near the Avenue de Paris ; it is only two hundred and sixty-four paces — I have counted them since — and I knew the distance by heart — from Rue Saint-Pierre, or rather from Place des Tribunaux, to the Avenue de Paris. I knew also that on that Avenue de Paris stood the prefecture of the department, and that it was there, in the buildings of the prefecture, that King William lodged, slept, breathed, and took his repose !

“ Well, well,” I said to myself, “ it would put a strangely different face on the war, if the King of Prussia should wake suddenly from a sound sleep to

find himself a prisoner in the hands of a few determined Frenchmen ! Yes, that would be a dream ! And such a dream ! The conqueror sleeps. The prisoners are on the alert. They throw themselves upon their jailers, they seize their weapons, they gag or kill the sentinels, they are free, and with one accord they rush toward the prefecture which is contaminated by the presence of the enemy. A grating embellished with the imperial bees forbids entrance to the building. They break it down. The post guarding the entrance is gagged. Doubtless some German sentinel will fire and give the alarm ; but before any one has time to come from the neighboring barracks, the apartments where the sovereign sleeps are invaded, the chancellors, the staff officers are taken prisoners, and the old king sees at his pillow a determined man, the leader of the expedition, who, holding him in awed subjection under the barrel of a German revolver snatched from one of his soldiers, says to him : —

“ ‘ Not a word, not an outcry, not a movement, Sire ! You are our prisoner ! ’ ”

Ah ! as soon as that idea took root in my brain, it sowed fever there, — a generous fever ! All my blood boiled at the prospect of the adventure, and I no longer regretted my failure to join the Buenos-Ayres legion. No, no, I no longer regretted it. Was not my present project, this thing that I could attempt

there in Versailles, superior to all that the mobilized provincial legions tried to accomplish? They attacked the instruments, the subordinates, the supernumeraries. I, Brichanteau, would smite the invasion at its head. It was heaven that ordained that I should be arrested at Rueil and thrown like a bandit into the prison of Versailles. Fate pointed out my duty to me.

To kidnap the King of Prussia — the idea was rank madness, wise men will say. Yes, to-day, when our head rests quietly on our pillows, it seems like madness. But it was not, it was audacity. It was theatrical, and honestly theatrical. Is not the stage life? Did not Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan come near-rescuing the King of England? They would have saved Charles I. if history had not been against them. Whereas I had before me history not yet made, a scheme which permitted the realization of all sorts of possibilities. Once the king was my prisoner I would dictate to his Majesty such conditions as I pleased. Ah! it would be a very different thing from the commonplace information given me to carry to the authorities at Tours, in the shape of a bullet!

"You will raise the siege of Paris at once, Sire." —
"Very well." — "You will evacuate Champagne." —
"It is done." — "You will recall to Germany all your garrisons in Alsace and Lorraine — Ah! not a word, not an outcry, not a movement, Sire! I have you

fast. Well played, King William, but my country has its revenge ! ”

And I calculated that, however heroic a handful of thirty-seven men might be, they would quickly have been surrounded and wiped out in the prefecture, surrounded as it was by the German garrison at Versailles. But we should have our hostage, the most precious of hostages, — the king ! We should have him cowering at the muzzles of our guns, his guns. And we would not give him up until our retreat, assured by his presence in the midst of us, was safely effected. Yes, until we had regained our lines we would keep King William in custody. The slightest movement on the part of one of his soldiers and it would have been all up with him. I repeated to myself the words from *Les Funérailles de l'Honneur*, which I uttered so proudly at the moment I was about to stab Don Pedro the Cruel : “ One does not kill a sleeping man ! ” To which I replied, as in the drama : “ I will awaken him ! ” Even so. And if, by reason of some unforeseen necessity which one must always provide against under such circumstances, we should be obliged to consent to set the king at liberty on conditions less rigorous for him, less satisfactory to us, than those I had fixed upon in my own mind, our *minimum* would be the raising of the siege and the withdrawal of the invader's troops to a distance of twenty-five leagues from Paris.

Oh! upon those points, even though we should be constrained to take the monarch's life and to leave our own on the spot, we would agree to no compromise, I would agree to no compromise!

And I already imagined myself, on a dark night — it was essential *to select* a night when there was no moon, when the footlights were not lighted — I imagined myself at the head of the thirty-seven captive heroes, gliding along like shadows to the prefecture, after depriving our jailers of their weapons; in thought I was present at that epic scene: the scaling of the iron fence, the sudden irruption into the prefect's salon, and William's sudden awakening beneath that gilded canopy, reconquered by France. And the flag! We had no tri-colored flag, but we would at all events strike the black and white flag of the King of Prussia, or the black, white, and red flag of Germany that was probably waving over the prefecture! That would serve the purpose. Ah! to hurl that black eagle down into the courtyard with a loud shout of triumph, while some one of us — surely there would be a pianist in our number — played the *Marseillaise* on Madame la Préfète's piano! What ecstasy!

I tell you, it was possible. It was practicable. It would change the whole face of affairs. The thing that does not happen seems mad, but not more mad, I swear, than the thing that actually happens. And

I said to myself: "This shall be done! — Brichanteau, perhaps thou mayst never enter the Comédie-Française, but thou shalt make an irruption into history!"

But I could not make the irruption all by myself. I must have collaborators, I will not say accomplices. At first I intrusted my plan to only one or two among those of my companions who inspired most confidence in me. There might be *sheep*¹ among the prisoners. I opened my heart and mind freely to an old Crimean Zouave who dreamed of nothing but wounds and bruises, and was forever mumbling in his grizzled red beard his rage at not having *brought down* a Prussian.

He stared at me in amazement at first and asked me if it were practicable.

"To throw one's self on a jailer, gag him and disarm him," I replied, "is the *a b c* of art. Have you never read *Latude*, or *Thirty-five Years of Captivity*?"

"No."

There was nothing literary about him. But he assented very quickly. "If there are blows to strike, I am in it, I'll strike! I took Malakoff; that should be more difficult than to take a prefecture!" It was not quite the same thing. After the Crimean I

¹ That is to say, prisoners who are set to watch their fellow-prisoners, and, by winning their confidence, to extract information from them.

sounded the poacher. He confessed to me under his breath that he did really *bring down* the Uhlan, because the cavalier had hugged his niece too tight. We talked about these matters in low tones, sometimes in a sort of half-Parisian, half-military slang, so that the sentinel, if he were listening, could not understand. And little by little, one by one, I enlisted recruits. I told them the plan I had formed; I held up the hope of victory before their eyes. I dazzled them with visions of their future glory. I said to them: —

“Will you?”

And all answered: —

“We will.”

Thereupon I pledged them to secrecy, and told them to wait until the time came. They would be notified.

“Be always ready! *Ad augusta per angusta!*”

They were not familiar with Hugo, but they shuddered instinctively, which proves that the drama is true to nature.

I said to each neophyte: —

“Mouth closed, heart mute, tongue prudent, hate concealed,” and I went on to the next. Not one refusal. My idea made an indelible impression. Eyes blazed, fingers moved nervously, as if they were already pressing the trigger of a musket.

They all said to me: —

"Whenever you choose!"

I replied:—

"Confidence. Patience. Silence and mystery."

And I waited. I had said to Martineau the poacher, and to the old Zouave:—

"You must leap upon the first sentinel, gag him, choke him, strangle him. That's your business."

They had answered:—

"It shall be done, and done in good shape. At your orders."

One morning in January, my jailer, who spoke French, said to me with a sneer:—

"Well, it's done. We have no King of Prussia now!"

That gave me a start. Had fate anticipated me? Was the conqueror dead?

"No," the man went on, "we have a German Emperor! His Majesty was proclaimed yesterday in the great *Galerie des Glaces*. Ha! ha! how your Louis XIV. must have laughed!"

I cannot say whether Louis XIV. laughed very heartily, but I myself was blind with anger. I remembered the fourth act of *Hernani*, Charles the Fifth's monologue, and it seemed to me that the guns of Mont-Valérien protested against the proclamation of the Kaiser. However, it made no change in my plan. None. Instead of carrying off a king, I would carry off an emperor, that was all!

The Emperor was ours! He was the same old

William. But that last insult suggested to me to hasten the catastrophe. Were we all notified? All. Were we all ready? All. Solemnly, in mysterious silence, — everything had been decided upon, and repeated from ear to ear, — putting out our hands without a word, we had sworn inwardly to make the attempt at the risk of losing — what? a thing of small consequence, our skins; and I said to myself: —

“Now, Brichanteau, to work!”

What was I waiting for? I have told you. A moonless night. Darkness. I must have darkness. I said to myself, “To-morrow!” To-morrow! And once more I imagined the admirable scene: the gagging of the sentries, the soldiers of the post bound hand and foot, strangled, the open door, the street, the prefecture. I should have done it, we should have done it. Determined men all. Heroes, jaguars. I had fixed the date, January 19th.

But the Governor of Paris was not notified. He attempted a last sortie; Buzenval. We heard the cannonading in the depths of our prison, and our hearts skipped about like little goats! The German Emperor was present, of course, away off, we had no idea where. Perhaps he would not return to the prefecture that night, but would sleep in some cottage near the field of battle, unless he should be — delicious hypothesis — driven from Versailles by our victorious troops. At all events we had to wait,

and to wait again the next day. What had been the result of the battle? Had the day been glorious or disastrous to us? Our plan hung upon that interrogation-point.

Oh! but we did not wait long before finding out that it was another defeat!

"An unsuccessful sortie," said my jailer, gayly. "Parisians shut up like rats. Rats! They can eat one another."

He was in high spirits, the imbecile!

Thereupon I said to myself, —

"Ah! destiny has spoken. Now let us act!"

And I prepared to act. I was simply meditating whether, instead of making our way to the prefecture by the Avenue de Paris, we should not do better to enter by the door leading to the offices, on Rue Saint-Pierre, that being much nearer: a hundred and seventeen paces, instead of two hundred and sixty-four. Bah! we should see! That would depend on the soldier who happened to be on guard there. But the devil took a hand in the affair. My friend Martineau the poacher, the man whom I had selected, with the Zouave, to leap upon the sentinel during our evening promenade, — the poacher, a redoubtable, daring fellow, was taken to the infirmary. Oh! he would have left his bed, ready to go on, even though he was sick. But the jailer told me that the surgeon feared an attack of

fever, and proposed to keep the man in that devilish infirmary to avoid contagion. Should we attempt the blow without that gallant fellow's sturdy arm? I had confidence in him, absolute confidence. He was game to the end. For the first bold stroke I needed Martineau! So I said to myself: "Let us have all the aces in the game. Let us wait till to-morrow."

And the others repeated beneath their breath, —

"When you say the word!"

I had my troupe well in hand. The play was ready, we could go on.

Ah! I shall never forgive myself for having waited! Ah! that rascal of a Martineau! Monsieur Scribe is quite right: small causes, the *glass of water*! Always small causes, scraps of paper, grains of sand! Small causes produce great effects!

If Martineau does n't get better, so much the worse for him; if Martineau does n't come back, we will act without him! I will give his rôle to somebody else and up goes the curtain!

We should be thirty-six fighting men, thirty-six heroes, instead of thirty-seven!

But, alas! what a crushing of our hopes! The parleying, the shameful parleying between Paris and the German army had begun; Monsieur Jules Favre made his appearance on the bridge at Sèvres; the flags of truce came face to face. They parleyed and

parleyed, and when Martineau, coming from the infirmary, resolute and bubbling over with enthusiasm, said to me : —

“Well, great chief, here I am ! Is it to be to-night?”

I replied with a hopeless gesture and pointed to the insulting smile of the sentinels. The capitulation had been agreed upon, — the execrable, barbarous, heart-rending capitulation ; and the news, being already known among my men, had quickly melted their resolution. The idea of peace was pleasing to them. The psychological moment had passed. They no longer had faith, they no longer had audacity. They thought only of returning to their homes. They fancied themselves already free. The country (*pays*) of which I spoke to them, was now nothing more than their little province (*pays*), their bit of land. They said to me : “It’s all over, they’ll soon turn us loose. What’s the use of breaking our own heads now? Too late !” Ah ! woe is me ! They were right. Too late ! It was too late ! We should have kidnapped the Emperor on the 19th of January, and then, instead of the fruitless sortie of Buzenval, who knows whose memory the country would have enshrined in its calendar?

Who knows? — I know, yes, I ! I had foreseen everything. Ah ! how scornfully would I have cast in that old man’s face the lines of the poet :

“ Songes-tu que je te tiens encore ?
Ne me rappelle pas, *nouveau* César romain,
Que je t’ai là, chétif et petit, dans ma main,
Et que, si je serrais cette main trop loyale,
J’écraserais dans l’œuf ton aigle impériale ! ” ¹

It was all over. I had missed my great day. I have missed many others. I have gone over to the believers in immortality !

But, at all events, I shall die with that fair dream. And, when the pessimism that afflicts the latest generations threatens to invade my essentially sentimental and, I do not hesitate to say, spiritual and optimistic nature, I remember my thirty-six comrades in the prison at Versailles, the débris of defeat, marauders or adventurers, all of whom shared my generous dream, my chimera if you will, all of whom would have given their lives to accomplish it, all of whom were ready to undertake that magnificent game of stake-all, and not one of whom, not a single one, would have been tempted to barter for a little gold, to betray, in exchange for his liberty, the project of a madman whose madness at all events took the form of patriotism.

Ah ! how far away it seems ! How sad it was !

¹ Dost thou consider that I hold thee still ?
Remind me not, thou newest Roman emperor,
That in my hand I hold thee, a weak puny thing,
And that, should I but clench too close this loyal hand,
I’d crush thy proud imperial eagle in the egg !

How glorious it might have been! I ought to say that the German authorities did not even wait for the conclusion of peace before setting me at liberty.

"You can go back now to your Normandie," said the little red hussar, who was on hand to give me my freedom, and who knew — they all knew them — Frédéric Bérat's novels, which we have forgotten.

I began to laugh, a stupid laugh.

"Ah! *dame*, to see one's province again is always pleasant, *bédame*, yes!"

And I took my passport for Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray. But I resorted to strategy to return to Paris, as I had done to leave the city, and I found myself once more, sad and lonely, in my lodgings on Rue de Bondy.

"Hallo!" said my concierge, staring hard at me, "we thought you were dead. Have you come back for the elections?"

The elections? Go to!

I returned for art's sake. I opened Corneille, my old Corneille. That comforted me.

Since then I have never been able to hear an actor imitate the Norman dialect on the stage without a vague desire to weep. And for what do I weep? You can guess. The irreparable. A vanished dream! If I were not telling a true story, your patriotism might be stung, wounded. One does not joke about

defeat. But, whether it was the dream of a sick man or a fool, this that I have told you of was very near accomplishment. Ah! that 19th of January, that 19th of January! Except for General Trochu's sortie, the Emperor was ours!

VI.

BRICHANTEAU'S PAST.

IN very truth, monsieur, you may well say to yourself that he who tells you these things is only a braggart, a Gascon, a babbler of nonsense. Perhaps, as men of business say, you would like some references. Before being the garrulous old fellow I am — and faithful as truth itself — I dreamed like other men of apotheosis and constellations. I was young once. And it's not everybody who has been young, no! If I were a woman I would not tell my age. But it is such a long time, such a long time that I have been wandering about, through highways and byways, seeking my daily bread after seeking glory, — yes, it is so long, so long that you might expect me to be as old as the towers of Notre-Dame. I am no longer in my first youth, *parbleu*, but after all I am not yet sixty-five. My arm is still vigorous. Ask the prowling villain who tried to knock down the *good old man* on Boulevard de la Villette the other evening. And I have seen many things! I have seen many things! What a fund of reminiscences in this head of mine! When I think that Monsieur Beauvallet was once jealous of me, and

that Rachel refused to take me on her American tour because she was afraid I should create too much of an impression beside her ! Do you think I am boasting ? I have passed the age of illusions ; to-day, as yesterday, as always, I tell you the true truth !

Monsieur Beauvallet ? My teacher at the Conservatory in Monsieur Auber's day. I entered the Conservatory, in the old house on Faubourg Poissonière, in 1848, with the Revolution. I was eighteen years old. And what dreams I nourished under my brow ! When I was a little fellow, at Versailles, — I am of Versailles, as you know, — I recited poetry under the trees on Boulevard de la Reine. I had heard Ligier at the Versailles theatre, — Ligier in *Les Enfants d'Édouard*, — and I could imagine nothing, nothing, you understand, nothing above the actor who sways great crowds and tosses the words of poets to them. My father, who was employed at the mayoralty, wanted to make me a quill-driver like himself, a creature bending over papers with an official heading, and passing his days copying letters written on regular forms, which were countersigned by the mayor or his deputy. Poor father ! No, I would never consent to waste and yawn away my days in an office ; I thirsted for air and space and adventures. I should have been a sailor if I had not been an actor.

An actor ! When I spoke of going on the stage and becoming an actor, my mother, who was very

pious, crossed herself, and my father wondered what horrible Bohemian he had hatched, he who knew nothing of life but his government documents, his well-cut goose-quills and his round porcelain ink-stand, always filled with the same ink, — his blood, poor drudge.

“Can you dream of such a thing? An actor!” he exclaimed. “A sluggard’s trade! a starveling’s! Are you in love with poverty, Sébastien?”

I let him talk. I learned poetry by heart. I told mamma about the lives of the famous actors, Baron, Lekain, Talma, — Talma, the Emperor’s friend, the pensioner of the King of Holland! A king of the world was Talma!

“Oh! *parbleu*,” said my father, “if you should be a Talma!”

“Why not?” I rejoined.

But mamma at once interposed: —

“Even if he should be a Talma, actors are excommunicated!”

Luckily my father was a free-thinker. He read Voltaire. He had in his library Pigault-Lebrun’s *Citateur*. He did not detest comedy, and it was he who first took me to the theatre. The poor man realized that the narrow life of a clerk in the mayor’s office of a provincial city is not the *summum bonorum*. He said often to himself — and he repeated to others — his “*Parbleu!* if he should be a Talma!” And

little by little, — for when all was said he was master of the house, — he forced mamma to accept the idea, although she heaved many a quiet sigh.

“After all,” she said, “if that disaster should come to pass, that he should be a Talma, I should simply have to pay a little more for him!”

We lived in the old Saint-Louis Quarter, and mamma was always at church. She put her whole heart into the house-keeping, however, and the good people, with their only son, adored each other and were happy. When I played at Nantes the *Vicaire de Wakefield*, a part created by Tisserant at the Odéon, I remembered their chimney-corner and I made myself up with my father's face.

“If he should be a Talma!” And why should he not be a Talma? I had the figure, — I have it still, — the voice; that also I still have, a superb voice, too beautiful in fact, you will see why; I was dark, slender, muscles well developed, with curly hair and very soft eyes. Very soft, but very expressive too! I could render incarnate, at will, Corneille's heroes and Victor Hugo's, especially the latter. I have retained, thank God, an old-fashioned tendency to romanticism, and I still love the plume; yes, I detest *turnips* in sculpture, *rondouillard* in painting, and *bourgeoisism* in literature. That is where I stand.

At fourteen I could say the whole of *Ruy Blas* and the whole of *Hernani* without a stutter; but I bur-

rowed a little in the classic too, because one must know something of the classic to pass the examination at the Conservatory. That is still the case.

I shall never forget the day in October when I appeared before that terrible jury, as agitated as at the time of my first communion. I can see it all now. I can see the little room, painted in the Pompeian style, in sea-green tints, surrounded by pink and blue, and the little stage, raised a few steps, which overlooked the horseshoe table at which my judges sat. Oh ! that long green cloth with round, white, porcelain inkstands—like the government inkstand in which my father dipped his clerkly pen ! the paper scattered over the table and the gray or bald heads bending over the papers and memoranda, or looking again—some with the assistance of an opera glass—at the candidate for admission upon whom they were to pass judgment !—ten or twelve men, constituting the Committee of Instruction, all old, the professors on the right and left, Monsieur Auber, the president, short and pale and active, in the centre ; and beside him the government commissioner, Monsieur Édouard Monnais, Monsieur Bazenerye, commissioner at the Théâtre-Français, Monsieur Alexandre Mauzin, commissioner at the Odéon, and Messieurs Scribe, De Planard, Delavigne and Perrot ; and, beside them, the men whom I had applauded at the Comédie, standing in line in the

dark galleries of the Palais-Royal : Monsieur Samson, Monsieur Provost, Monsieur Beauvallet ! All of them looking at me, listening to me, taking notes ! Those everlasting notes !

I have seen that little room many times since then ; but on that day I saw at first only a great void, a great hole below me, and over yonder, on the other side of a grand piano which separated me from them and which was used for musical examinations, all those gentlemen, that artistic tribunal, — my judges.

Ah ! when the usher called me and tossed my name to that jury, a mist passed before my eyes. I was talking quietly with some young men and young women who were awaiting their turn in a sort of reception-room.

“ Monsieur Brichanteau ! ” said the usher.

A door opened. I rushed upon the stage and attacked the great scene of Orestes' madness. Strangely enough, I was agitated just before, when awaiting the word ; I was perfectly cool when I touched my foot to the boards, my first boards. I am a man of battle, — the actor, the man of action. The audience, instead of confusing me, excites me. Either one is a born actor or one is not. I smelt powder. For the first time I was able to make myself heard. They heard me, I promise you.

My voice filled that room of washed-out tints like a peal of thunder. I saw Monsieur Auber moving

about in his arm-chair, and Monsieur Samson, who had rather a sharp voice, put his hands to his ears. There is in that examination-room, on the first floor, a box, a very small narrow box, which looks very dark up there ; it has a brick-colored rail. It is the box in which Napoleon I. used formerly to listen to the trials. On the day in question the box seemed to be full, entirely filled by a single spectator, a fat lady who was Mademoiselle Georges in person, Mademoiselle Georges Weymer, associate member of the Committee of Instruction on dramatic studies. I did not then know whom I had for an auditor ; but I could see that heavy mass of flesh, probably deeply moved, sway back and forth in that dark hole.

I have often acted Orestes, I have often given expression to his madness, but never, no never, with so much ardor and volume of voice as on that day. I shook, I panted. With my extended right hand I described crawling motions, to represent snakelike undulations : —

“ Pour qui sont ces serpents qui sifflent sur nos têtes ? ” ¹

And with my tongue pressed against my teeth — *sss* / — I hissed away as if the reptiles had been there, sinister and threatening, over the heads of Monsieur Auber and Monsieur Scribe.

Suddenly the president struck a blow on the table

¹ For whom are these serpents that hiss above our heads ?

with a small ivory hammer — like an auctioneer knocking down an article — and Monsieur Auber said to me, very courteously and graciously : —

“Thank you, monsieur.”

I saluted the Committee, I saluted the usher who had opened the door, I forgot to salute Mademoiselle Georges in her box, and I left the room, accompanied by a sound of pens scratching over paper — my judges were taking their notes — and a sort of flattering murmur. I descended a flight of stairs and found myself in the courtyard of the Conservatory, where all the young people who, like myself, had presented themselves for examination, were huddled together, feverish and impatient.

Ah ! all those youthful faces beneath that dull gray sky ! Youths, young girls ! Mothers of future actresses, with the shawls of Gavarni's *mammas* draped over their plump or bony shoulders ! The Conservatory to-day gives one no idea of what that little world, full of faith, was in the days of my youth ! The candidates of to-day look like princesses, compared with the poor girls of those prehistoric times, who dreamed of becoming Rachels, as I myself expected to become a Bocage or a Frédéric, and who had escaped from porter's lodges or come from the heights of Belleville or Montmartre, Corneille in hand ! Ah ! the little four-sou dresses, the muslin sewn by mamma, the little flat collars, well or poorly ironed, the straw hats

that cost nothing at all, and the breakfast brought in the mother's market-basket ! To-day they wear black silk dresses for the examination, and compete in satin petticoats. Sometimes they drive in coupés to attend a professor's lectures. All the young women who present themselves with their certificates of capability and go to the Conservatory when they leave the Hôtel de Ville dream of becoming actresses as they would become teachers. The stage is as good a market as any for the daughters of impoverished merchants, ruined brokers, or retired colonels ! The stage is a profession. People calculate the share that a *sociétaire* puts in his pocket, and go to their rehearsals as others go to their offices. Men say to themselves that a first prize entitles one to exemption from military service, that one can earn as much by playing Molière as by being a floor-walker at the Magasin du Louvre, and one decides to go to the Conservatory as to the École Centrale. Poor fools that we were, we deserved a better fate with our craving for the laurel wreath and hard work ! Not one of those girls was thinking, I will wager, of the little house they all want to-day. The altar of Art, yes, — as much as you please ! That is what they saw in their dreams ! I am told that it's the fashion to make fun of the altar of Art a little nowadays !

And that whole crowd of competitors surrounded me, questioned me : —

"Is it very terrible? — Were you afraid? — How are *they*? — Are *they* very ugly? — Do you have to speak very loud?"

I answered : —

"Speak as loud as possible, I fairly thundered! — literally thundered!"

They gazed at me in admiration even then. A man who had passed his examination, even if he should not be admitted, and who had thundered before the Committee! — I already felt that I was somebody. I walked back and forth among the groups. All those anxious, curious youthful glances fixed upon me gave me a feeling of superiority! I sowed advice right and left.

"Ah! how lucky you are to have passed, monsieur," said a girl to me, in a trembling voice. "It seems to me as if I shall never have courage!"

I looked at her. She was a little blonde, a fragile creature, timid enough in appearance, and so poor! She pulled over her shoulders a wretched black woollen shawl, and under her straw hat, which was also black and somewhat worn, she made me think of one of those pretty shivering English girls who sell frozen flowers about the doors of theatres in London, their teeth chattering with the cold, on winter evenings, as I had seen them in pictures.

"What, you won't have courage? Why, you must have courage, mademoiselle! Look at me; I had!"

She said to me, shaking her head, something like little Jeanne Horly at a later day, — at Perpignan, you know, — “Oh ! you !”

And I felt in that *Oh ! you !* her instinctive admiration — I can think of no other word, and it did not make me vain — her admiration for the air of self-assurance that my square shoulders and my deep voice gave me. I had that gift, and she felt its spell. But strength is not everything in art ; there is charm also. And she had charm, the poor girl, who, when she answered, *Oh ! you !* seemed to imply : “You and I are two very different people. You were born to fight your way, while I — ”

“My dear child,” I replied cordially, “nature does not cast all its creations in the same mould. It has several *styles*, has nature. You have your qualities, I have mine. Have courage !”

Then I asked her what she intended to recite to the committee.

“Aricie,” she said.

“Aricie ? — splendid ! You are graceful and refined, your voice is sweet, very sweet. Give them Aricie ! And when you recite it, go as near as possible to the edge of the stage. I kept at a distance from it. That was quite right for me ; I took my spring and I thundered. You, on the other hand, must speak your piece very near and sing it softly ! I am a peal of thunder, you are a lyre !”

She listened to me with very intelligent eyes ; deep, blue eyes they were, and it seemed to me as if I were already an old master instructing a pupil in his art. An audience of five minutes had given me for life a self-possession that has never failed me since ! And furthermore, I had a very pleasant sensation as I walked about the courtyard of the Conservatory with that child, who, by instinct, had come to me as to the tamer of wild beasts, as to the master. Magnetism !

Through the soiled windows of the class-rooms looking on the courtyard, came the plaintive notes of violins, muffled, but pleasing to the ear, played by competitors in music, and the soft accompaniment seemed made to add an indefinable tenderness to that interview between two young people who were strangers to each other, opening their hearts for the first time.

One is naturally trustful at that age, however. She was sixteen. She was the daughter of a stage-carpenter at the Ambigu, who had died at the hospital of injuries received by falling from a mast during a performance of *La Closerie des Genêts*. She had always lived about theatres, and, as she had no trade in prospect, her grandmother—she had no mother—determined to send her to the Conservatory. That pleased her, too. She had faith like myself, and she said to herself that nothing on this earth can be com-

pared to that dream-life. But the thing that frightened her was her timidity, the slight volume of her voice, — a good voice, however, of caressing quality, an elegiac voice.

"If you are admitted," I said, "I will teach you to use your voice!"

"Ah!" she replied, still with the inflection of the *Oh! You!* of a moment before, "that will be easy for you!"

We conversed thus, drawn together by a common excitement. Intimacy comes quickly in hours of danger. In ten minutes I knew her name, and she knew mine. Hers was Jenny, Jenny Valadon.

"Valadon! You must take some other name," I told her. "Valadon! I don't know why, but that seems to me a singer's name!"

"Oh!" said she, "if it were only a matter of finding a name under which to make my début! But first of all I must make my début. *Voilà!*"

Little Jenny interested me. She trembled like a leaf at the idea of appearing before the Committee; In vain I told her that Monsieur Auber would not eat her; she trembled — and so did I, by the way. At the thought that in a short time those men sitting up there around the green cloth were going to vote on my fate, my legs shook and there was a buzzing in my ears. Admitted! To be admitted! Alas! not to be! I repeated to myself Hamlet's soliloquy, adapted

to the situation, and I paced the courtyard of the Conservatory, saying to myself: —

“If I count the pavements and end on an *even* number, I shall be admitted! *One, two, three, four!*”

And when at the end of the courtyard the number turned out to be *odd*, I exclaimed: “I must have made a mistake; that does n’t count!” And I began again: “*One, two, three, four, five, six!*” I was killing time!

The day came to an end at last, and the hour arrived when, the jury having consulted their notes, their famous notes, and having voted up yonder on the admission of the candidates, we were all standing under the arch of the *porte cochère*, crowded together like sheep in the fold, with a tight feeling at the throat, awaiting the exit of the members of the Committee, eager to know which of us had been chosen! And in the gloom of the falling night, under the gas-jet that shone upon all those tense young faces, now become pale as death, it was a devilish touching sight, that coming down of the jury, whom all those feverish, haggard eyes eagerly questioned. For nearly an hour we stood there, our eyes riveted on the staircase where the Committee would appear. We waited, saying nothing, or speaking low, very low. One could hear the beating of those poor hearts of twenty years, of sixteen years, if one listened intently! As soon as a shadow

appeared on the stairs from which the sentence was to be pronounced, a great cry, a clamor, an agonized *Ah* / escaped from every breast. We pushed and tried to rush toward the staircase. But the ushers were there and the concierge. They forced back the pupils, their parents, friends, mothers, the whole waiting crowd, like a troop of convicts.

At last a member of the Committee appeared. He descended slowly, a little disgusted at having to undergo the questioning of that mob of candidates ; then he seemed to make up his mind to throw himself into the midst of the palpitating, feverish throng. After him came another, two others. And we instinctively held our peace ; we stood aside before that jurymen whose legs we saw first, then his trunk, then his head, and who came down the last steps as if he carried the lives of that little world in his hand. And indeed he did ! But, as soon as the first of the jurors had plunged, as if drawn by suction, into the centre of that crowd, heads, clenched fingers, eyes, lips were stretched out to him, stopped him, jostled him, clung to him, and cut off his retreat.

“ Am I admitted, — Godard, Louis Godard ? ”

“ Is Palmarin admitted ? ”

“ My son, my son, Jean Bougeard, is he admitted ? ”

“ And Martineau ? ”

“ And Galabert ? ”

“ Bonneval, monsieur, — Bonneval ? ”

"Suberville, Amédée Suberville?"

The other struggled as best he could, pushed away the little bands that clutched his clothing, the mothers who pulled him by the skirts of his coat, and at last reached the gate into the faubourg, answering: —

"I don't know. I don't remember. I think so. I'm afraid not. The list will be sent you!" And he escaped as he could. You would have said he was a victim abandoned to the Bacchantes. Pretty Bacchantes, sometimes! But he was not the one to be pitied, no; but all the poor wretches in that crowd who were waiting, hoping, with tears in their eyes, nerves all unstrung and the blood boiling in their brains. Ah! the shrieking mothers, the snarling of the rejected, the threats, the appeals for justice, the protests! "It's infamous! It's a degradation! Men who know nothing about their business! Refuse my son! Refuse my daughter!" All this howling confusion at nightfall of an October day. I have seen that sight many times since. That evening I did not notice it. I was absorbed by my own anxiety, *my to be or not to be.*

"Empereur! Empereur! Être empereur! O rage!
Ne pas l'être!"¹

And it was Monsieur Scribe — Monsieur Scribe, whom I admired that day for the first and only time,

¹ The Emperor! the Emperor! Oh! to be emperor! O God! to fail! (*Hernani, Act IV.*)

and whom I embraced in my excitement — it was Monsieur Scribe who relieved me from my agony.

To my eager question : —

“ Brichanteau, monsieur, — Brichanteau ? ”

He answered as he passed, very hurriedly : —

“ Yes, yes, Brichanteau, to be sure. Admitted ! ”

And he escaped to his carriage.

Good Monsieur Scribe ! I have forgiven him much in memory of that *to be sure*, which he said in a hurried but amiable tone.

Admitted ! I was admitted ! I had but one idea now, — to fly, to rush to the railway station, take the train and land at Versailles, between my father and mother, crying : —

“ Your son is a pupil at the National Conservatory of Music and Declamation ! ”

But I dared not go. Suppose Monsieur Scribe had made a mistake ? There was a Princeteau among the aspirants, — Princeteau, who ended by being a messenger at the Melun railway station, after dreaming of playing Delaunay's parts at the Odéon. Suppose Monsieur Scribe had confounded Princeteau with Brichanteau ? That was not probable. In spite of everything, I must acknowledge that Monsieur Scribe had a keen scent, — I am just even to him, — he had a keen scent. He could not confound Princeteau with Brichanteau. And yet, suppose he had done so ?

And I remained in the anxious crowd of competitors, male and female, of excited relations and exasperated mothers, until I was absolutely certain, until I received official confirmation of my success.

Now, while I was waiting there, a little more at ease than before, thanks to Monsieur Scribe, my fate was being discussed upstairs between the professors whose duty it was to select from among the pupils admitted those who seemed to them best adapted for their respective classes.

Yes, when the voting was at an end, the session concluded, the members of the Committee gone, the professors remained together and divided up the candidates admitted by the jury according to the special qualities which they thought that they divined, which they felt in them. The professors of comedy claimed those of the pupils who seemed adapted to comedy; the professors of tragedy took charge of the future tragedians. They made a friendly division of the spoils.

And, as I have since learned, — and this little incident has had a decisive, I venture to say, injurious influence, upon my whole career, — lo, and behold, when my name was mentioned, Monsieur Samson exclaimed in his shrill little voice, sharp as an acid: —

“ Ah ! that fellow is destined for tragedy, beyond any question ! Monsieur Beauvallet's class ! ”

Whereupon Monsieur Beauvallet's deep voice, like a peal of thunder, rejoined : —

“ Why so, if you please ? ”

“ Why, because he has a voice like a howitzer ! ” replied Monsieur Samson.

“ Is tragedy an artillerist's trade, pray ? ” retorted Monsieur Beauvallet.

“ No, but — ” said Monsieur Samson.

And a dispute ensued between the two associates as to the respective merits of the artists who were especially adapted for comedy and for tragedy, and Monsieur Provost has told me since that his two colleagues indulged in a little dialogue bristling with epigrams. After which Monsieur Beauvallet consented to take me in his class, but without enthusiasm, and like a man who has something on his mind. What was it ? Monsieur Samson's jocose remarks ? The howitzer ? No. What he had on his mind was rather the quality of my voice. That voice, that terrible voice was destined to make an implacable enemy of my professor. As he had an admirable voice, an incomparable voice — so he said — he felt a little annoyed to hear that youthful voice — mine — roaring like the thunder and drowning his ! Yes, that was it ; Monsieur Beauvallet was jealous of me. The professor felt that he was surpassed, dethroned, by this new-comer, his pupil. That jealousy, so frequently found even among the

greatest artists, was to follow me throughout my career, and when any one mentioned me to him, even in the very last days of his life, what do you suppose Monsieur Beauvallet would do? He would begin to laugh and say : —

“ Brichanteau ! Ah ! yes, Brichanteau ! The man who boasted of extinguishing my thunder ! ”

Now, *extinguish* was just the word. I extinguished him. When he told me how to emit a sound, I would emit it when my turn came, but with greater volume ! Beauvallet in the third power ! Did he shout ? I shouted. Did he make his voice vibrate ? So did I. These exercises in vibration — repeating *bra, bre, cra, cre, dra, dre, brabre, branbre, bribre* — were so many duels between Monsieur Beauvallet and myself.

“ Monsieur Brichanteau, pray repeat : *Gros doreur, quand redoreras-tu mes trentes-trois rapiers si rares ? Je redorerais vos trente-trois rapiers si rares quand j'aurai redoré les trente-trois rapiers si rares du restaurant Romain !* ”

And I would repeat it without taking breath, rolling my *r's* : “ *Gros doreur quand redoreras-tu mes trente-trois rapiers si rares ?* ”

Those *r's* were like the roar of an express train, like the rumbling of a tempest in my mouth, and you would have said a heavy dray was passing at a gallop under the Conservatory windows on a cast-iron pave-

ment. I extinguished Monsieur Beauvallet, I tell you ; I extinguished him !

I remember one day when the fancy took him, before the whole class, to recite with me the great scene from *Polyeucte*, between Polyeucte and Néarque. He took the part of Néarque, I of Polyeucte. Polyeucte was one of Monsieur Beauvallet's triumphs. I must say that he was very strong in it. But that day, you see, perhaps because he remembered Monsieur Samson's remark about my voice being like a howitzer, he was evidently determined to show my comrades that his voice was superior to mine in volume, and he began to bawl — excuse the word — to bawl, why, in a way to deafen me.

“Aha !” thought I, “you mean to bawl loud enough to confuse me ? Very good, I'll bawl as loud as you ; I'll bawl louder than you !”

And the louder Monsieur Beauvallet bawled, the louder I, Brichanteau, bawled. One bawl answered another. It was a bawling contest. The whole class seemed frightened, and some of the pupils stopped their ears. I did not say my lines ; no, I repeat, I *bawled* them : —

“Allons, mon cher Néarque, allons, aux yeux des hommes, Braver l'idolâtrie et montrer que nous sommes !”¹

Ah ! yes, we showed them who we were !

¹ Come, dear Nearchus, come and let us defy idolatry before the eyes of men, and show them who we are !

Néarque bawled, Polyeucte bawled, and Polyeucte bawled louder than Néarque. It was a lesson in bawling, and I learned my lesson so well that finally, with a last effort, I silenced him. And I finished the scene amid the instinctive, involuntary applause of my comrades, — cheers, too, which Monsieur Beauvallet never forgave me.

And so, when any one asked him for his opinion of me, he would say : —

“That fellow has nothing but voice !”

He heard my voice, he could not see my heart. Voice I certainly had, but faith, ambition, devotion to art, those too I had. My poor parents now shared my hopes ; even my mother told me that she would do dress-making if necessary to help me to finish my studies at the Conservatory. My father thought of nothing but the prize for tragedy that I might win. And we would say to each other sometimes, with a sigh : “ Ah ! if we had an engagement at the Comédie-Française ! ” Poor father and mother, they did not live to see all my mortifications. Mamma died that same year, and before my last year at the Conservatory father followed her, and I was alone, — an orphan ; very poor.

And on the day when I confidently expected to carry off my prize and obtained only an *accessit*¹ — on

¹ An *accessit* is a distinction accorded to those who come nearest to carrying off the prize : “ honorable mention.”

equal terms with three rivals — I said to myself that perhaps my old people were happier where they were, not witnessing the downfall of my hopes. What a day! I thought of throwing myself into the river when I left the Conservatory. The second prize, there was no first, went to Lévi, — Lévi Sully, who afterwards acted on the boulevard. The first prize for women to Mademoiselle Périga — also on the boulevard. I was not jealous of their success, but I was in despair at my own failure. I said to myself by way of consolation: "It's not your fault, Brichanteau, it's Monsieur Beauvallet's jealousy that is persecuting you. He must have said, in the notes he submitted to the jury — oh! those notes! — that you had nothing but voice! It is he, your professor and your rival, who has condemned you!"

I was desperate all the same, and I could not refrain from going straight to Monsieur Auber, when I met him two days later in the courtyard, and saying to him — ah! yes, bawling at him: —

"Monsieur Auber, it is an injustice. My dear master, it is an iniquitous shame!"

I can see Monsieur Auber now, — small and smiling, with an overcoat of the color of *café au lait*.

His only reply was to ask me: —

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-one."

"Oh! well, you will see many others!"

He was right ; I have seen many others. Life is paved with injustice. But I had enough of it at the Conservatory. I had too much indeed. I swore that I would never again set foot in that *hole*, and, in truth, I never did go back there. I was wrong. If I had remained I should have taken the first prize the next year from Van Oven, — Émile Van Oven, — whom neither you nor I know, and yet he was once the laureate in tragedy, like so many others ! Van Oven ! he made no more of a success than Brichanteau ! I yielded to a natural but imprudent fit of passion, and instead of returning to Monsieur Beauvallet's class, I took the chances of the roads and of engagements in the open-air of Art !

I acted at the Gaîté, then at the Cirque, where they were giving military plays, — I have taken the part of young officers who shouted : "*Au drapeau ! En avant !*" amid showers of bullets, and my voice, which extinguished Monsieur Beauvallet's, soared above the roar of musketry as the eagle above the battalions. Those were the prosperous days of theatres, and I remember with emotion the poor Boulevard du Temple, demolished so many years ago. What a charming corner of gay, good-humored, unceremonious Paris ! Those who never saw it can form no idea of what it was. From the Théâtre-Historique to the Petit-Lazari, imagine a succession of theatres where all sorts of things were played, dramas, vaude-

villes, operettas, pantomimes ! There were the Gaieté, the Cirque, the Folies, the Délassements, and all of them had their patrons. People stood in line between the barriers to purchase tickets. They jostled one another at the wickets, they went from Frédéric to Deburau, they wept over *Le Vieux Caporal*, they cried at *Pierrot en Égypte*, they besieged the orange-girls and the dealers in cocoa, and when a theatre made a hit, it diverted its overflow into the others. Not another city in the world had a corner like that, a constant fête, something amusing and unique ! A kermesse with the added charm of Paris ! The city has torn down, torn down ! The rats have fled from the poor old theatres, but with them have gone the kindly audiences, who were pleased with everything, who swallowed two five-act dramas in a single evening, *Latude* from half-past six to nine, and *Le Chien de Montargis* from nine till midnight.

Ah ! I regret my old Boulevard du Temple ! I heard my first *bravos* there ! I acted there with Frédéric Lemaître ! And when I had finished, Jenny would come and wait for me on Rue des Fossés, behind the theatre, — Jenny Valadon, my little comrade at the Conservatory, my pupil, — and we would return to Rue de Malte, where we had built our nest, away up under the roofs. For that which was to happen had happened. I had fallen in love

with Jenny, and she had given herself to me, poor girl, as she had given herself to art, without counting the cost.

My whole youth was Jenny! A good girl! A charming girl! Yes, as I had told her the first day, if I had the strength, she had the charm. She had clung to me at once as to a lover and a master, as a virgin vine clings to an oak. I advised her. We loved each other dearly, but I think that we loved art, the stage, even more dearly. Shall I tell you? We loved each other in it. Up there in our attic we sometimes passed whole nights on the little balcony, repeating verses, with Paris at our feet. That may perhaps seem childish. At twenty years a man has other things to do. But we loved each other dearly all the same, and, old man that I am, I never see certain nooks in the forest of Meudon, certain paths at Viroflay or Sèvres, a certain wine-shop or towing-path on Île Saint-Denis without saying to myself, "I have been there with Jenny!"

She shared all my hopes. Like myself she detested the commonplace, trivial art, insipid vaudeville. We had said to each other that we might both become stars, bound together by our joint successes, like Frédéric Lemaître and Clarisse Miroy. And thereupon, as I was stifling in Paris, I had taken a flight into the provinces with Jenny. There at least I could give free play to my talent, unfold my wings.

I played the leading rôles. But what a life ! Do you know, I found my first contract the other day, and I asked myself, as I read it over, if it were possible to mock so at poor artists and to bind them hand and foot in such stipulations. You would not believe it. There are clauses that I know by heart. Listen to this : —

“ The undersigned, Messieurs Poirier-Thiviard et Cie, managers of the Théâtre du Tournai, of the first part ” —

I take Tournai as I might take Laon, Dijon, Perpignan, or Auxerre —

“ and Monsieur Sébastien Brichanteau, of the second part, do covenant and agree as follows : —

“ M. Brichanteau agrees, by these presents, to undertake at the pleasure of the governing board, the subscribers and the manager, and at such theatres as may seem good to the latter, whether at Tournai or elsewhere, and even in foreign countries, the *grand premier* rôles, and, if need be, the rôle of general utility man ; and generally speaking, all the annexed rôles, either in chief or in common with others, at the sole option of the manager.

“ ART. 1. — The contracting artist binds himself to act in all the performances in which he is announced to act, either in the advertisements or on the bulletin, as well as to attend all rehearsals at the hours indicated on the daily bulletin, *even when such rehearsals are to be held after the play*. In the event that the artist, by his tardiness, shall cause the rehearsal to be delayed, the manager is authorized to deduct from his stipend, by way of fine, a sum fixed by the regulations, already existing or to be made.”

Or to be made ! Precisely. I bound myself beforehand to accept even the unknown.

"ART. 3. — The artist binds himself to play *all the rôles* that his capacity and his physique allow him to play, abandoning to the management, *absolutely without reservation and waiving all right to any discussion*, the distribution of parts in all plays, old as well as new, in such manner as the said management shall deem fit, without regard to the names or regular line of parts of artists who have created rôles, whether in Paris or elsewhere. The said artist also binds himself to play during the present year, if the management calls upon him so to do, *at least ten complimentary rôles*.

"ART. 5. — The artist will furnish all costumes, footwear, headgear, wigs, and accessories of the clothing required by his rôles *including those outside of his regular line*.

"ART. 7. — Whenever the stage-setting of an opera, drama, vaudeville, or spectacular play requires the presence of the artist, *although he has no rôle therein*, he *shall be bound to appear*, to learn and sing the choruses. He agrees to act whenever he is called upon to do so, and *even without warning in case of a change of bill*, any rôle that he has already acted, and will therefore be expected to be present at the theatre during the first piece on every day that a performance is given."

"Yes, I have sung choruses ! — I have represented — represented ! — wedding guests in Labiche's comedies ! I have taken part in *airs de sortie* ! I have sung in chorus with the Huguenot nobles in *Le Pré aux Clercs* ! Oh ! Corneille, Racine, Hugo ! Ah ! Monsieur Auber's remark : "You will see many others !"

But article 7 is nothing beside article 8.

"ART. 8. — In case performances shall be suspended, as a result or by reason of some unavoidable occurrence, prohibition, *public calamity, revolution, religious festivals* — yes, religious festivals! — *epidemics*, freshets, fire, cold weather which freezes the reservoirs of the theatre, or for any other cause that shall bring about a proved deficit in the receipts, the management may constitute the company a partnership, retaining, however, all its rights and privileges as against its members. A committee of three members selected from the company shall be charged with the duty of superintending the receipts and expenses, and all the general expenses being paid, the surplus shall be devoted to the payment of the associates pro rata, according to their salaries, choristers, musicians, and employés excepted; the classes herein excepted shall receive their salaries in full, the management reserving for its own share only the sum due the most highly paid artist."

And article 9! — Listen, monsieur!

"ART. 9. — In case of illness, whatever its length, *though it be for but* a single day, the salary shall cease until such time as the artist shall resume his duties. The salary of every lady — *married or unmarried* — in a state of pregnancy shall be suspended for six months, or even longer if the person's appearance is offensive to the spectators. The management shall have the right to provide a substitute for an artist whose health shall be deemed too feeble to allow him to continue to fill his engagement, and whose indisposition recurs so frequently as to interfere with the repertory. The artist will be expected nevertheless to continue his services until his successor is engaged."

And there you are ! Do not be ill, or you are lost ! Pray to the good Lord that there be no religious festivals, or you will receive less pay than the musicians and the sweepers ! And at your first appearances try to please the subscribers, who vote upon your fate in the greenroom, the audience, the municipal authorities and the management, Monsieur and Madame le Maire and their deputies, or you will be sent away, with your hopes dashed to the ground, and your salary for your first month's trial as your only solace !

And, if you join your company on a stated day, repayment of the expense of travelling, third class, on the railroad, with the right to have your luggage up to two hundred kilogrammes transported by the regular carrier. What a Potosi ! That is the reality that succeeds so many dreams ! Go thy way, then, strolling player, tossed about, in very truth, like a coasting vessel !¹ Go, good man, and console thyself with Art, immortal Art ! That is what I did. Laugh at me if you will ! when the living and the quarters were poor, we imagined that the thin soup was ambrosia, and we deemed ourselves fortunate. We lived on bravos. That is not fattening. Try it. But it makes the heart glad.

I would not exchange my memories of destitution

¹ *Cabotin*, strolling player ; *navire de cabotage*, coasting-vessel.

and glory for those of a president of the Council. I have been more than a minister in my day; I have been a king. I have been everything. In the evening, sitting by my stove, amid the smoke from my pipe, I see, I live again, those bygone days, those evenings, those triumphs. All my blood boils.

No, you could never imagine the profound enjoyment of the actor who carries an audience off its feet, who stirs a multitude to frenzy! Oh! those glorious evenings of *Lazare le Pâtre* and *Gaspardo le Pêcheur*, from Tournai to Bayonne! Ah! Gaspardo! When I said to Sforze: "*If thou owest thy life to the father, pay thy debt to the child, and if, within the week, thou seest me not at Milan, thou wilt take pity on the child of the condemned man and wilt give him thy name and a share of thy bread!*"

And when I entered, accompanied by Pietro, the faithful Pietro, and followed by a sentinel with whom I was struggling, throwing my sword at Visconti's feet and giving myself up to save my son: "*Here is my sword, still stained with blood and rust, and now may justice be done to all!*"

It is the fashion to-day to laugh at the old repertory, the classics, melodrama. Our actors, who are incapable of playing those rôles, roar with laughter when they read them. Poor fools! *Lazare le Pâtre!* Why, it is a whole world in itself. Père Bouchardy? Pray bring him to life, my masters! The distribution

of parts alone would tell you that it is not mere brummagem art, oh ! no, indeed : —

“ Cosmo de Médicis, *under the name of L'Étranger* ;

“ Raphaël Salviati, *under the name of Lazare le Pâtre* ;

“ Juliano Salviati, *under the name of Sylvio le Moissonneur* ;

“ Judaël de Médicis, *under the name of Rodolphe.*”

Those were dramas indeed !

It is in that play that Médicis says to Rodolphe, who offers him a safe-conduct : —

“ *A safe-conduct ! Doubtless 't is a snare !*”

And then there was *Christophe le Suédois* !

With what noble pride did I, in that rough but vigorous drama, draw myself up to my full height under the insults of my father, André the woodcutter, or rather Captain Wolgann, — for the peasant André was in reality Wolgann the soldier, — yes, how I submitted to the painful test when he reproached me with being only a mandolin player, whereas I was in reality a seeker climbing the mountain, Mont Gêta, to find the remedy for the plague born of the torrents that form the lakes that are called lakes of death, the plague that was desolating Sweden. The situation is clear, is it not ?

“ What sayst thou ? ” my father asked me. “ What are thy resources ? A mandolin. Ay, that's the

key with which the beggar opens the door of the rich man at whose hands he seeks alms. That my son should have a mandolin ! Knowest thou, Christophe, what name men give to that — when one is of thy age and should have a brave heart ? They call it the coward's means of livelihood ! ”

And he dashed the mandolin on the ground and broke it ; and I suffered, seeing him suffer !

And *Longue-Épée le Normand* ! That was one of my triumphs ! You should have seen how I treated the sebastocrator Andronic Comnène, and how I said to old Michel, who was dismayed to find in me the child he thought he had thrown into the river : “ And now, by the light of the stars look at my face ! ” I brought the whole house to its feet when I spoke of Agnès de Montfort : “ Yes, I will take her far from this accursed court, where poniards are poisoned and men and women live in secret understanding. I will destroy the memory in her mind, I will forget earth and heaven to see but her, to adore but her. So let us while away the hours. Let us wait ! ”

The *her* was Jenny. She played Agnès de Montfort. She gave me my cues in the provinces. We were announced as *Monsieur Brichanteau and Mademoiselle Viola*. That was the name I had given her, — *Viola*, violet. That name fitted her character. And, as I have told you, she was my pupil. But look you : the fatality that had decreed that Monsieur

Beauvallet should be jealous of my voice, and should reply, every time that I presented myself as a candidate at the Théâtre-Français, "Ah! yes, Brichanteau, the man of thunder! The thunder is too late!" — that fatality, which had assailed me in my ambition, was about to assail me in my love.

I had so much voice, so much voice, and such a fine, powerful voice, that Jenny, when she acted with me, wore herself out, poor girl, in her scenes with me. She was like a linnet singing amid the roaring of the thunder. Do you understand? She lost her breath, she exhausted her lungs, she made herself hoarse. She was an Aricie, an Iphigénie, but not an Agnès de Montfort or a Doña Sol. She might have succeeded in *Hamlet*. Ophélie, you know, is a mere figure, a shadow. No need of voice. But I exhausted her strength. Yes, I crushed her, poor child, without meaning to, under my howitzer, Monsieur Beauvallet's howitzer, — and so completely, alas! that poor Viola was threatened with the loss of her voice!

At Dijon, one day, at Dijon, we were going to play *Hernani*. In the fifth act Jenny was usually so flushed with her efforts to pitch her voice like mine, that the audience roared with laughter when she cried: —

"I am pale, am I not, for a fiancée?"

Pale, poor child, pale! A veritable tomato. I advised her to go and see a doctor. The doctor told

her bluntly : " Madame, you are in a fair way to ruin your voice. You demand of it more than it can give ! " Very good ! True, no doubt. But in that case what was to be done ? The doctor used no circumlocution : leave the stage.

That was easy to say. But how was she to live ? And then, Jenny loved the stage, she adored it ! Leave the stage ! — it would be as well to light a brazier full of charcoal and have done with it. My poor Jenny might still continue to travel around the country with me, but only on condition that she should act no more with me, because I sapped her strength, exhausted her. I swear to you that when it was made clear to me that it was my voice, Monsieur Beauvallet's bane, that was wearing away my poor Jenny's lungs and literally killing her, I was tempted to accuse nature ; I was on the point of cursing my thunder.

To abandon the stage or abandon me, that was the alternative presented to Jenny. She adored me, she adored the boards, and when she had to choose between the two she wept.

" It is a question of life or death," the doctor had said. " If you continue to perform those gymnastics, you will be spitting blood within three months. And then ! "

There was one way of arranging matters ; that was to continue to follow the same road, but not to act to-

gether any more. But that demanded a sacrifice of artistic self-esteem even more than of love, which would have cost Jenny too dear.

"To be near you and hear you acting with another — no," she said, "I could not do it. I should prefer to be far away, not to see it!"

She had said: "I should prefer to be far away," as she might have said anything else, and yet in those words she had pronounced the veritable doom of our love. My voice was killing her. As she could not renounce the stage, it was necessary that she should act with somebody else. We must — ah! yes, that was the fatal word — we must part. Because of my voice? Yes, because of my voice. I did not choose to be the poor child's executioner.

To exhaust her lungs! To see her spit blood! Accursed voice! No, no, that should never be. I too preferred to be far away; but it was like this: I risked wounding the poor girl to the heart by proposing to her to "go each his own way," I with my voice, she with hers. We who had so cheerfully endured hardship together in all weathers since the days in the attic on Rue de Malte! Why was my voice not a medium, pleasant voice which would not make my master jealous and my mistress phthisicky? Yes! why? I should be at the Comédie-Française to-day, and I should not have to submit to heart-breaking, cruel engagements like those of which I

recited the articles to you. When I think that my comrades of the Comédie-Française complain of their lot !

However, it was necessary to decide upon something. I told Jenny that I could not steal her future from her, shatter her voice, and tear out her lungs. I uttered the fatal word *separation*, but I added hastily : —

“Although I say separation, Jenny, there will be no separation. We shall meet again some day. Hearts meet.”

Where? I have no idea, but the words came to my lips quite naturally. I had said them in some drama ; they applied admirably to the drama of my life.

And then I talked to her of the success she would have in gentler rôles, affectionate rôles. In trying to help her I injured her. I crushed her femininity. I extinguished her charm.

“You see, Viola, I am the thunderbolt that has fallen on my violet. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” she said, wiping her eyes, “yes, I understand. Certainly, I understand, but it ’s hard.”

“And sad !”

“Very sad. Do you remember our first meeting at the Conservatory?”

“Do I remember it? You were so pretty !”

“And you so kind ! Who would have said it would

end like this, Sébastien? Indeed, who would have said it would end at all?"

"*Rodrigue, who would have thought it?*" I cried.
"*Chimène, who would have said it?*"

With that, taking her in my arms, hugging her, kissing her forehead, I plunged instinctively into the admirable scene from *Le Cid*. We wept; she gave me my cues. Never upon any stage have I played Rodrigue so finely as I did that day in our little room at Dijon. I lost my head, I sobbed, I cried. I used the word just now, and I venture to repeat it—I *bawled*, I *bawled* with grief. And poor Jenny, hardly able to follow, spoke louder and louder, tried to shout, tried to reach my terrible diapason.

"Adieu, sors, et surtout garde bien qu'on te voie !

. Laisse-moi soupirer,
Je cherche le silence et la nuit pour pleurer."

I did not listen to her, being carried away by my inspiration and my grief. Suddenly she stopped; I felt her double up in my arms, suddenly attacked by a paroxysm of coughing that prevented her from continuing Chimène.

"My Jenny! My little Jenny!"

Her eyes were on fire, there was a bright red spot on her cheekbones, and she put her handkerchief to her lips.

The doctor was right. That *duo* in *Le Cid* was our last, and Jenny and myself thenceforth followed

our own roads as chance willed. I cursed my voice, my thunderous voice, my roaring howitzer! We promised to meet again; yes, every year on the same day, the day of our separation, to meet in front of the Conservatory, Faubourg Poissonnière, and to dine *tête-à-tête* at the wine-shop, even if we had not a maravedi, even if she should become a duchess or fall in with a prince.

We met four times four years in succession. That was little enough, doubtless, and yet it was a good deal for human love. Jenny's voice was improving. Jenny, like myself, was touring the provinces, but she was acting in comedy, she had abandoned melodrama. "You have abused your voice," they told her; "keep what remains of it." Even in art we were separated. She said to me sadly: —

"I regret Hugo; but one must live!"

But was she really living? Like myself, doubtless, by hook or crook in the open air. Once she told me — this that I am going to tell you is the truth — that, being without a theatrical engagement, she had accepted an offer to appear at a *café-concert* as an elocutionist. She recited poetry, some of Coppée's, and monologues. Very good. But the manager compelled his artists to take up a collection among his customers, and instructed the pretty girls to be amiable to the male clients as they passed the hat. That pretty little business is actually carried on. A

syndicate was formed among the actors to regulate it. They began well, but then the syndicate, instead of giving its attention to that, began to dabble in politics. There were probably some comrades who wanted to be municipal councillors or deputies. And then what! — the abuse continued!

Jenny fled from that den of iniquity as from a den of wild beasts, and found an opening at a theatre in Lyons. Oh! the illusions of the Conservatory! The time passed. The years fairly flew. They do go so quickly. We no longer met on the appointed day. At one time I was in America, at another time she was in Roumania. We wrote at first, then, as the years passed, we ceased even to write. Spiders spin their webs over all dreams. I knew, however, that Viola was still acting.

As I grew old I said to myself: —

“She probably has *taken* the duenna rôles by this time.”

My accursed voice! Had it not been for that blaring trumpet the doors on Rue de Richelieu would not have been closed to me, and, having become a person of influence, I might have been able to get my poor Jenny admitted! Who knows? Perhaps she and I would have been *sociétaires*!

The other day I was looking over a theatrical newspaper and reading the column entitled *Europe Artiste*. Engagements, — Personnel of companies, — Positions

wanted. I looked at everything: "*A young artist of twenty-four, prize-winner at the Conservatory, having acted in comedy and melodrama, desires an engagement to play third rôles.*" I am not inventing. "*Wanted, a clerk or partner, with a small capital, very small will do, in an honorable and lucrative theatrical business.*" Ah! dreams, dreams, dreams!

And suddenly my eye fell on these lines, which stirred me from head to foot and went as it were to the very bottom of my heart: —

"Female theatrical costumes for sale, ordinary sizes, for jeune première rôles. Theatrical pamphlets in good condition. Jewels and wreaths. Successor to Mlle. Viola."

On the instant I saw, as in a flash of lightning, my whole past: the Conservatory, Monsieur Auber, Monsieur Beauvallet, my judges taking notes, Jenny, Aricie, our young comrades, the provinces, the hard years and the last *duo*, the scene from *Le Cid* at Dijon; *Chimène, who would have said it?* And the tears gushed from my eyes as I exclaimed to myself, throwing down the paper, —

"Tonnerre!"

I said it so loud — I was on Montholon Square — that people turned to look at me and began to laugh. My voice, my blessed voice! Always that. It caused the bystanders to laugh when I was thinking of Jenny

and shedding those tears to her memory like tears from a holy-water sprinkler.

Too much voice, that is my fate, — and not enough luck. But I do not complain. I still have Art. And I have lived !

VII.

FOR NAPOLEON.

AMONG my friends is old Dauberval, who has retired without succeeding in making his bow at the Comédie-Française. His dream, the dream of all of us, the Comédie-Française. He has had success on all sides, has Dauberval, and notorious success. He has been the darling of the women on the boulevards and at specialty theatres. He has fought for them, they have fought for him. In his old age he bought a little house on the banks of the Oise at Isle-Adam, and he lives there quietly, with his wife and niece, — an old maid, — tending his garden in summer, and in winter sitting in the chimney-corner, chewing the cud of his reminiscences. He is a fine fellow. He would be perfectly happy, were it not for that secret wound in his heart ; the Comédie, the Comédie-Française would have none of him.

Oh ! when that subject is broached, old Dauberval is savage ! All his stored up rancor escapes like the steam of a locomotive. He is no longer young, but he becomes young once more. He works himself into a fever, he fulminates, he foams at the mouth.

"Look out, Dauberval," I say to him, — I knew him when he was *jeune premier* at Havre, in the very springtime of his youth. "In the first place you'll make yourself sick. In the second place, you make too much of it. There are so many others, so many others who deserved to enter Molière's home and whom *they* would have none of!"

And I give him the names. I know very well that I do not convince him. The others are not he. And I myself, to whom Monsieur Beauvallet's jealousy closed Rue de Richelieu — but I beg your pardon, I am repeating myself — I myself, whom I do not mention, am not Dauberval! He suffers keenly, does Dauberval, and I go quite often to Isle-Adam to see him and console him. He comes to meet me at the railway station; we cross the bridge and walk slowly to his house, talking as we go, skirting the shore; and Madame Dauberval, who always has a good cook, awaits us with delicious dishes well served. I find at Dauberval's much to remind me of my past: old posters, old photographs of actors, lithographs of actresses, once so pretty, now decrepit or sleeping somewhere or other, at Montmartre or in the provinces — Jenny! As Dauberval has been less of a wanderer than I, he keeps those relics, withered wreaths, faded ribbons, things which I have too often scattered along my path, like my illusions. However, I have kept some illusions and some wreaths, thank God! as you know.

When we are at table, Dauberval and I open the flood-gates of our memories.

"Do you remember playing *Les Burgraves* at Nantes, Brichanteau, without costumes?"

"And *Les Mousquetaires* with the doublets used in *Les Huguenots*?"

"Do you remember pretty Céline Barbeau of Sotteville-lès-Rouen?"

"Do I remember her! What's become of her?"

"And Eugénie Mercier?"

"And Laurence Herblay?"

"And Jeanne Horly?"

"And —?"

Thereupon good Madame Dauberval interrupts us: —

"Messieurs, messieurs, be careful. You forget Louisette."

True enough, we do forget Louisette; Louisette is Dauberval's niece. She is nearly fifty years old. She is thin, pimply, and has quite a mustache. But she is a "maiden." Her ears must be respected, her poor hanging ears that have never, never heard, perhaps, a declaration of love. She has led a pious life in that household of actors. She has grown to womanhood and grown old mumbling prayers at the fireside where her uncle studied his rôles. When old Dauberval, in the old days, created a new part and she saw that he was nervous and restless, *in a*

funk, as we say, Mademoiselle Louissette would say nothing, but she would quietly go and burn a taper in secret at her parish church, Sainte-Élisabeth du Temple, to the end that Uncle Dauberval might make a hit.

She addressed prayers like this to the Virgin : —

“ O Marie, overflowing with mercy, grant that my dear uncle may appear irresistible in Lovelace ! ”

And the Virgin doubtless granted Mademoiselle Louissette's prayer, for Dauberval was irresistible.

He was, in my opinion, the model lover. Delaunay had more style, Dauberval had as much warmth. Ah ! a charming man ! And a good friend ! When I think that it was for Napoléon — yes, for Napoléon — that I fell out with him !

It was last autumn. I had never passed a more tranquil day, a more interesting evening at Isle-Adam. Before dinner, as we were walking on the banks of the Oise, Dauberval, to whom I was saying that he could still play the *jeune premier* rôles whenever he chose, although he was past sixty-five, Dauberval confided to me that he kept in a corner of his house a consecrated spot, a temple, I might better say, where he sometimes secluded himself ; a small room under the roof, which he had furnished exactly like his dressing-room at the Gymnase, — the same furniture, the same shelf laden with the same jars of grease, the same jars of rouge, the same pencils, the

same mirror in which he used to *make up his face* in the old days, the same flowered creton on the walls, the same dressing-gown, the stool on which he sat, the couch on which he reclined, — his dressing-room, in a word, his dressing-room in the good old bygone days ! He had it there in his house, and in a closet hidden by a curtain Dauberval still preserved a portion of his wardrobe : marquis's coats, *mousquetaires'* cloaks, the dandy's open-work stockings, the tight-fitting trousers of the lady-killers of the Restoration, — the wardrobe of the *young man that was* ! Cherished poetic relics, having the savor of the aftermath of plucked laurels.

“Why, Dauberval, what a splendid idea !”

“Hush !” he said mysteriously, chasing with the end of his cane the dead leaves that were whirling about our feet. “I do not admit it to any one, to any one. They would never allow me to rest in peace at Isle-Adam if it were known. The mayor, the authorities, the president of the Fanfare would ask me to act for the benefit of a multitude of petty good works that they invent. I could n't do it. But what I can do, you know, and what I do, when I want to give a little pleasure to my wife and my niece, is to say to them : ‘Close the doors ! I am not at home to any one. This evening I am going to give you a surprise. This evening you shall go to the play !’ And what is said is said. I go up to that dressing-room, where

I recover all my youth and my speech ; I dress myself and make myself up. The wrinkles disappear, oh ! there's nothing easier ! — the eyes brighten. I put on a coat *à la française*, and presto ! I see myself once more in *Philiberte* or *Clarissa Harlowe* or *Manon Lescaut*, — like Déjazet I have acted eighteenth century plays a great deal, — and I come down, strutting, self-satisfied, and applauded, my old Brichanteau ; for my wife and Louissette *make my entrée* for me as at the theatre. I enter by a little door, *right, in a jog piece*, and I act ! Yes, I act ! And, if I do say it, I act better than I ever used to act ! I have my heart of twenty years, my voice of twenty years, my calves of twenty years ! Look you, Brichanteau, this evening, yes, this evening, my good Brichanteau, I am going to let you see it, and you shall tell me, you shall tell me frankly, if, among *their sociétaires*, there are three who could keep the pace with me ! ”

“ Ah ! what an excellent idea ! ”

I was not sorry to see Dauberval act again myself. I have always been one of those who defended him when he was attacked. Some said he was affected, airy, an old-fashioned fool. Not at all, he was refined and impassioned ; he may have had a little purr in his breathing, and with the purr a weakness in his legs ; his calves shook — yes, one might say that his calves, like Montescure's cornet-à-piston, made eyes

at one — but a declaration of love from his lips was a genuine declaration of love all the same.

“ Ah ! an excellent idea, an excellent idea ! ”

In my delight, I said that again and again.

We dined in high spirits. Dauberval had a little Vouvray wine, dry and sparkling, that put us on our mettle. What stories of the good old days we told that evening ! It was all right, Mademoiselle Louise did not take fright. And the good people of Isle-Adam who passed along the river-bank could hear nothing through the closed shutters.

Suddenly, at dessert, Dauberval rose.

“ My children,” he said, rubbing his hands, “ I am going to give you *a surprise !* ”

It was his usual remark. Madame Dauberval uttered a cry of joy. From the tone of her husband’s voice she had readily guessed what he was going to say.

“ A play ? ” she asked.

“ Yes, my dear love, a play. I am going to act *I dine with my mother !* ”

“ All alone ? ” I inquired.

“ All alone. On these occasions I summarize the different rôles that take part in the scenes with me, and I play my part from one end to the other. And I will tell you one thing, my dear Brichanteau, from experience, that that does n’t injure the play. Sometimes it improves it. The fewer parts there are, the better it’s understood. Is n’t that so, Cécile ? ”

"Certainly," Madame Dauberval replied.

Mademoiselle Louisette said nothing. She was delighted, however, no less than her aunt, to see her uncle act once more. But the next day she would go to Abbé Polard and confess, accusing herself of having taken pleasure in a play; and Abbé Polard, smiling, would give her absolution as usual, and beg her to take a portion of it to her uncle.

I dine with my mother! I was very glad to hear *I dine with my mother* again. I had never acted in it, that sort of play not being adapted to my temperament. But just as Duberval rose to go up to his dressing-room, I timidly offered to take the other parts. But I instantly saw that I afforded him no pleasure, — none.

"Other parts! What other parts?" he exclaimed.

"Why, are there not three parts in *I dine with my mother*?"

"Yes, there are three," replied Dauberval: "the painter Henri Didier, the chevalier, and the Prince d'Hennin, — I am speaking of male parts, — two female parts, Sophie Arnould and a soubrette. But, as I said to you just now, what's the use of giving the others? I am going to play the Prince d'Hennin for you. Indeed the Prince d'Hennin is the whole play!"

And Dauberval left us there, myself looking at Mademoiselle Louisette at the other end of the room,

where she seemed to be mumbling a prayer, and Madame Dauberval, whose eyes blazed with happiness ! These surprises renewed her youth, and when Dauberval appeared, costumed as in the old days, in some rôle in which she had heard him applauded, the good woman was at least twenty years younger herself. A little of her youth — nay, rather her whole youth — remained, like a lasting perfume, in her husband's wardrobe.

Dauberval was not long in dressing ; I must do him that justice. He came down very soon, in full costume, painted, with his wig powdered in front, a sword at his side, a sky-blue velvet coat, slightly worn at the seams, but still elegant, with a vague odor of camphor. He entered the room, put out his leg to show his calf in its gold-spangled silk stockings, twirled about on his red heels, and said : —


“Behold the Prince d’Hennin !”

And I give you my word that, from top to toe, smeared as he was and at such close quarters, Dauberval was in truth the Prince d’Hennin, or any other prince of the eighteenth century, wearing his wig plastered to his forehead and his sword *en verrouil*. He was Richelieu, Conti, Létorières, any fashionable dandy you can name ; and Madame Dauberval, in an ecstasy, clasped her hands for joy, while Made-moiselle Louissette gazed at the white and red paint

that her transfigured uncle had laid upon his cheek-bones.

"The Prince d'Hennin!" continued Dauberval. "He is bringing a New Year's gift to Sophie Arnould! You know where we are, my children? We are here —"

Thereupon he described, with a vigor peculiar to himself, how he had given the actress his English horses, all the horses in his stable; and he acted in the most bewitching way—I say bewitching, for he bewitched me—the scene in which the Prince d'Hennin refuses to dine with Sophie Arnould because he is to dine with his mother: "If you knew the Princesse d'Hennin, you would know that she is not the sort of person to whom one sends a message like that. Imagine a tall woman with thin lips, a stern brow, a cold glance, always buried in an arm-chair of old oak. Everything about her changes; she alone has not changed. She has preserved the manners, the customs, even the costume of the last century. In her eyes my brother and I have never grown to manhood; we are still the two children whom a tutor took to her twice in the year, on her birthday and on the first of January. Those are the only days on which she kissed us. 'Twas a solemn kiss, slowly bestowed upon our foreheads,—the same kiss that she will give us a few moments hence; then a family dinner, in great ceremony, a silent, solemn



festival, at which my mother alone sometimes breaks the silence to tell us of the usages and customs of a great reign, and how our father powerfully aided Monsieur de Villars to whip the Imperialists — ”

Then, after delivering his speech with an art — ah ! such an art ! — an art that no one can boast to-day, I promise you, admirable, refined and light of touch, and with superior diction and melancholy and charm, Dauberval began to sing, — and I do not detest the plays in which the sentimental couplet helps to give force to the prose, — he began to sing, to the air of *Mademoiselle Garcin* : —

“ Ah ! tout cela n'est pas très gai, sans doute ;
Mais songez-y, voilà bientôt trente ans
Qu'au rendez-vous je vais, coûte que coûte,
C'est un devoir consacré par le temps.
Puis, les baisers de ma mère sont rares ;
Lorsque celui d'aujourd'hui m'est certain,
Il faut agir comme avec les avarés,
Il ne faut pas remettre au lendemain ! ”

You should have heard him ! In his mouth that couplet became as touching as Donizetti. I say Do-ni-zet-ti — I am of the time of *La Favorita*. Madame Dauberval's eyes were filled with tears. Mademoiselle Louisette probably thought that the lines resembled a psalm, and as for myself, faith, the corner of my eye was not very dry. And I was still more deeply touched when, suddenly, toward the end of the scene, Dauberval said to me, holding out the

book, which he had in the pocket of his sky-blue coat : —

“I was mistaken, after all. You were right. There’s too much dialogue now ! Give me the cue, old fellow. Do Sophie Arnould !”

And I did Sophie Arnould, — a genuine artist should be able to act any part ; but I remained seated, for I wished still to watch that devil of a Dauberval, so young and active and ardent and magnetic, and I contented myself with giving him his cue, crouching in my chair like a prompter. Only I modulated my voice— impossible not to modulate one’s voice.

“Come, Maurice, you will stay, will you not ?”

“I am much grieved, but in truth I cannot.”

“Ah ! and I was fool enough to believe in your love !”

“How now ! I do not love you because I cannot dine with you to-day ? But I will dine here to-morrow, every day, as often as you wish.”

“I do not ask you.”

“I do not love you ? I who have fought ten times for you ! Stay, I fight once more to-morrow with Monsieur de Fontanges, who avers that day before yesterday you sang *A natural* instead of *B flat*. If I did not love you, I should have agreed with Monsieur de Fontanges ; for you did really emit a — doubtful note. I do not say that it was not a *B flat*,

but between ourselves there was a little touch of *A natural!*"

"Very good! Take the side of my enemies! Criticise me! Hiss me!"

"No, no!—when I am to fight a duel on that account! Well, well, it was undeniably a *B flat*, and I will kill Monsieur de Fontanges! I hope that I am obliging— Three o'clock! the devil!"

"You are going, then?"

"To be sure!"

"And I wish you to remain; it is my will!"

"The king says, 'It is our will.' But stay, I have a way of arranging the whole matter. You are to dine alone—let me finish—and I will return and sup with you."

No, I have never seen Dauberval so charming and so perfect as in that dining-room, under the shade of the hanging lamp, within two steps of the table, still laden with dessert, which we had pushed into the corner *to make room for the stage*. I said to myself that it was a pity that such a man should have retired, and that if all the *jeunes premiers* of the present day should join forces and form a syndicate, they could not exhibit as much fire as that sexagenarian put into his scene with Sophie Arnould,—never! "Sophie, life has its duties, apparently trivial, but in reality genuine and sacred; you have not understood me. Whatever you may say, I love you and you know it

well!" Ah! what a voice, my friends, what a voice! A seductive voice. Such a quality of tone! The voice counts for something on the stage. Sometimes it is everything. For my part, I have told you that I had too much. Fools have succeeded, have made a name for themselves, because they had fine voices, just as Hyacinthe did, my old forgotten Hyacinthe, because he had a nose.

But Dauberval had not the voice alone, he had the heart. How do you say that in Latin? I have been told again and again, and had it all explained to me. *Pectus*, yes, *pectus est*. *Voilà!* Oh! that evening! I longed to embrace Dauberval, and, if the truth were told, I did not resist the longing. I threw my arms about him: "Admirable! bravo! sublime!" And Madame Dauberval also embraced him, and Mademoiselle Louissette, and the cook, Mélanie, who had come to listen after regaling us with a certain *soufflé*, — oh! a *soufflé* worthy of the master and mistress.

Dauberval was deeply touched. He wept. We mingled our tears. Once more, it was a lovely evening, an evening of pure art. Why need it have been disturbed by useless disputes upon politics? How it happened, you will see in a moment.

Dauberval was naturally a little excited after playing his Prince d'Hennin.

"You are wet through, my love," said Madame Dauberval, wiping his forehead with a towel.

She rubbed off some of the paint in the process, and Dauberval was not pleased. He wanted to keep his Prince d'Hennin costume and face.

"Do, at least, take something hot, Amédée. A glass of grog, — won't you have some grog?"

"Yes, I will have a glass of grog. And Brichanteau will have one too. Eh, Brichanteau?"

"Whatever you choose."

I am a very sober man, Dauberval is the same; and yet, I cannot say why, — perhaps because the private performance of *I dine with my mother* had excited our nerves, — we laced our grog a little, talking all the while, he still in the Prince d'Hennin's blue coat, I in ordinary unpicturesque civilian's dress. And lo, in the midst of our cordial chat, — I may fairly call it cordial, extremely cordial, and, I will add, on my part admiring, — a subject of discussion suddenly and unexpectedly made its appearance and exploded like a bomb.

"Come, Brichanteau," said Dauberval, "do me justice. Isn't it true that you can't find an artist at the Comédie-Française so well-fitted as I to play the aristocrat?"

"Yes, Dauberval, it is true."

"Have n't I the tradition, their famous tradition?"

"You have the tradition, Dauberval. You have the tradition from beginning to end."

"Is n't it true that Firmin did not play the mar-
quises any better than I play the marquises?"

"I should have to see Firmin again. But he did
not play Richelieu any better than you have just
played the Prince d'Hennin!"

"Then tell me why they would never admit me at
the Comédie. A little more cognac. It's not bad."

"Thanks, it is very good."

"Tell me why they thrust me aside, when they
engaged Messieurs So-and-so and Such-an-one, mere
novices!"

"Jealousy! Pure jealousy!"

"Is that really your opinion? When I think that
Méthivet — Méthivet — hardly fit for general utility
man — Méthivet is an associate."

"Who do you say?"

"When neither I, nor you, not even you, Brichan-
teau, you see I don't forget you," — I was not greatly
flattered by the tone in which he did me the honor
of coupling my name with his, — "neither I nor you
have even made our début on Rue de Richelieu."

"Oh! as for me, it's an old story. It was Beau-
vallet — my voice."

"There is always a Beauvallet, an obstacle or reason
of some sort. If it is n't absurd! If it is n't shame-
ful! Do you want me to tell you something, Bri-
chanteau? It is Napoléon's fault!"

"What do you say?"

"Napoléon's — Napoléon I. — that imbecile of a Napoléon ! "

I looked at Dauberval. He seemed to be in a furious rage. He had suddenly assumed a wild expression, like Hamlet when he sees the ghost on the terrace at Elsinore, garden side. He was looking in front of him at something or somebody I did not see, and that some one, that something, was a ghost, the ghost of Napoléon.

"Oh ! oh ! " said I, shaking my head, "Napoléon an imbecile — "

He interrupted me abruptly.

"A pure imbecile ! A layman who dared undertake to make rules for art, to codify the House of Molière ! A tyrant, who wanted no actors but courtiers, who understood nothing about the stage, nothing, nothing, nothing. No more about the stage than about anything else, by the way ! Oh ! that man ! "

And Dauberval made a terrible gesture. He was no longer the Prince d'Hennin, he was Marat. And thereupon I attempted to defend Napoléon against that unjustifiable attack. I say unjustifiable, but I am not a Bonapartist. I simply am grateful, as an artist, to that great man.

Napoléon ! I have acted him with pleasure. It is a rôle that I love. It is hardly in my usual line. Napoléon, by reason of his corpulence, would seem to fall rather among the *financiers*. But, by reason of

his great name, we may fairly say that he is a leading rôle, a great leading rôle. And then he is a remarkable figure. When a man takes the part he cannot pass unnoticed in a play, it is impossible. Moreover, I had the good fortune to know Gobert, who had known Constant, the Emperor's *valet de chambre*, and I have the traditions of both. When Gobert acted Napoléon, he was so like him that the old veterans used to faint in the orchestra. When I am shaved, I too resemble the Emperor. I have a medallion with his head in profile. Monsieur Ingres asked me once to pose for Cæsar.

Napoléon ! He was a part of my repertory. Ah ! I have played Napoléon in the provinces, here, there, and everywhere ! And when I was not playing Napoléon, I played pieces in which he was talked about. Those pieces would fill a whole library ! One of them I was especially fond of, — a drama in one act : *L'Empereur et le Soldat*, or *Le 5 Mai*, 1821. I played Rémond, a former grenadier of the Garde Impériale. Although very young, but well made up, I had the manner of a Charlet when I acted the part of that old soldier, who has become insane, and who, from a small provincial town, writes a letter to the Emperor, a prisoner at St. Helena, writes him that he is going to rescue him, that two hundred thousand men are ready, that the powder will soon speak, that they will have their revenge for Waterloo ! Ah ! I used to bring

down the house, when, donning my grenadier's cape, I spoke, from afar, to the Emperor: "My Emperor! Have pity on your old grenadier, and answer him! Come back!" And, at the end, when the last paroxysm of delirium seizes Rémond, — you should have heard me then! I would draw myself up, go through the motion of taking my musket, of putting on my haversack; I would twirl my mustaches, and take my place in the line, for the last review was to be held! And with these lines, sung to the air of *Les Trois Couleurs*, I would make the whole hall weep — what do I say? — I would weep myself!

"Il va venir, rangeons-nous en silence,
Au rendez-vous qu'il nous retrouve tous;
Il veut, enfin, combler notre espérance;
Ainsi que moi, de bonheur, tremblez, vous!
Nous la verrons, notre idole si chère:
Ah! comme moi, vous pleurez tous déjà —
Il va venir, lui, soldats, notre père!
Napoléon! l'Empereur! le voilà!"

Then I would go through the motion of presenting arms, and, under an hallucination which I do not hesitate to describe as extraordinary, I would cry, as if Napoléon were standing before me: "Ah! how he has changed! How pale he is! He wears a laurel wreath! His generals surround him: Kléber, Desaix, Montebello! Silence, comrades, and listen. He is calling the roll of all his gallant troops," — and I would listen intently. "La Tour d'Auvergne."

At that I would cry: "*Dead on the field of honor!* He looks at me! he knows me!"

A moment of silence; I would start, as if Napoleon's eagle eye had really rested upon me, and I would say, "*Present, Sire!*" and I would fall dead, stone dead! And then what recalls! Ah! that play. *L'Empereur et le Soldat*, is not as fine as *Le Cid*, but I have been as successful in it as in any play in my repertory!

And *Napoléon à l'île d'Elbe!* and *La République, l'Empire, et les Cent Jours!* And all the plays in which they used to throw palms to me and offer me wreaths! I, a romanticist and Chauvinist, loved them well. And so, when I heard Dauberval attack the great man whom I had so often made incarnate, the hero to whom I owed a banquet given by the students at Toulouse after a performance of *L'Empereur et le Soldat* on the stage of the Capitole theatre, I could not refrain from giving voice to my thoughts, and from time to time I checked my confrère to say:

"Excuse me, Amédée, excuse me, you are unjust!"

But that only spurred him on.

"Unjust, you say? Unjust? Unjust to an animal who prevented me from being a *sociétaire*? Yes, Brichanteau, it is all due to that Corsican! All!

"What!" he continued, "did we submit to the decree of a tyrant, we the free servants of an art superior to all other arts? Of all the institutions of

the Empire, nothing remains, and we are ground down by the caprice of a man who, instead of busying himself with extinguishing the flames of burning Moscow, made us subject to *chefs des emplois* !”¹

I still tried to stop him. Impossible. He was fairly started.

“Be just, Dauberval; the Code Napoléon still exists !”

“The Code ! Very well, I grant you the Code. But the Code applies to all Frenchmen, while the Moscow decree applies only to us, to us poor actors. The Moscow decree creates a privilege to the profit of some, and a tyranny to the loss of others !”

“But, my dear fellow, it was revoked in great part by the decree of 1850. People are always talking about the Moscow decree. It no longer exists. The decree of 1850 is the law to-day.”

“I pass by the decree of 1850,” retorted Dauberval; “my grudge is against the Moscow decree only, but in that, by heaven, I bury my teeth and my nails ! Fancy my gentleman, from the heart of Russia, imposing an aristocracy of *sociétaires* upon us ! There was only one decree that Napoléon should have signed, if he was determined to promulgate a decree from Moscow at all hazards, and that decree would have been a very simple matter !”

¹ That is to say, the leading actors in each line of parts, — *jeune premier, ingénieur*, etc.

"Let's hear your decree!"

"Oh! simple as good-day: *Every French actor has the right to make his début at the Comédie-Française!*"

"The devil! — well, how about authors? Would not authors also have some rights?"

"Authors are less interesting than actors; but, if you insist upon it, Napoleon might have added an Article 2: "Art. 2: *Every French citizen has the right to have his plays acted at the Comédie-Française!*"

"But, Dauberval, consider how many actors there are in France! And how many French citizens!"

"That's not my business, that's a matter of arithmetic, of statistics. I say that right is right, and that I was just as much entitled to make my début on Rue de Richelieu, as many others."

"Most assuredly."

"More entitled than others!"

"Certainly. And yet, my friend, — without defending the Comédie-Française, where I too was entitled to a place, I think, — let me tell you that if everybody was admitted there, if everybody's plays were acted there —"

Dauberval interrupted me, would not allow me to state any more objections, and, waving his hands, from which hung the lace wristbands of the Prince d'Hennin's costume, he exclaimed: —

"I don't attack the Comédie-Française, I attack the man, the ill-omened man, who organized it badly. Tell me ! after how many revolutions — it would be easy to calculate the number — do we still submit to the yoke of one of Cæsar's whims? A madman — for you know that Napoléon was mad. Read what scientific men say."

"Oh ! scientific men !"

"He was mad, and, what is more serious, he is overrated."

"Overrated? "

"Overrated."

I considered him decidedly unjust, absurd even ; but tell me how I was to prove it to him? He was started, — a horse escaped from his stall, — a bull in the public square and rushing on a gray frock-coat as if it were a red shawl.

"Remember that your Napoléon had n't even physical courage !"

"Oh ! what humbug !"

"It is n't humbug, it's a fact, physiologically a fact !

"Let us see, let us see," continued Dauberval, who was growing excited ; "you can't make me believe that he did his duty at Waterloo ! Cambronne, yes, Cambronne did his duty. Ney did his duty. Lobau, the man of show, did his duty. But he? He? Napoléon? He turned on his heel while they were still fighting !"

"Perhaps you mean to tell me that he was afraid? In the first place, the bravest men may be afraid. Bouffé, who was a very great artist, died of stage-fright the night of a first performance. I myself, who am afraid of nothing, I myself remember having had abominable stage-frights! Why, one evening when we were giving *Henri III.* — I was to play Saint Mégrin — I actually wondered whether I could walk on to the stage!"

"A man may have stage-fright before, but he should n't have it after or during! Stage-fright before the curtain rises, yes; but when one is before the footlights, no! On the eve of Waterloo he might be forgiven for being painfully agitated; but on the day of the battle, while the grenadiers of the Guard were being slaughtered — Can you imagine ourselves leaving the stage and allowing the other actors to be hissed? No, you can't imagine such a thing, Brichanteau, can you?"

I love my calling and I admire my profession. I do more, I honor it; I may say that I honor it in a double sense, by my respect for it and by my dignified life. But even so, when it came to comparing an actor on the boards to the Emperor on the battlefield, proud as I am of being an actor, I called that an outrage.

And I told Dauberval so; I told him bluntly: —

"I call that an outrage!"

I was wrong, I saw instantly that I was wrong.

"Ah!" cried Dauberval, "you think that an artist who causes the hearts of his contemporaries to beat with all the noble passions is inferior to a man whose whole genius consists in causing people's heads to be broken? Very well, you are complimentary to your confrères!"

"My confrères! my confrères! My confrères would n't have won the battle of Austerlitz!" I replied.

"Nobody knows," rejoined Dauberval.

"Do you think that Talma, at Austerlitz —"

"Talma would have sat his horse quite as well, and Rapp, with the scar on his forehead, could have come to him quite as well to say that the Russian guard was wiped out. Oh! I know that story, you see, I know it very well!"

"Can you imagine Talma on horseback?"

"Yes, I can imagine Talma on horseback."

"And winning the battle of Austerlitz?"

"And winning the battle of Austerlitz!"

"And what would you do with Napoléon meanwhile?"

"What would I do with him? Why, I would do nothing with him," replied Dauberval. "I don't bother my head about him, as the battle would be won without him!"

"By Talma?"

"By Talma, or by somebody else. For it was Rapp who won it, or Soult, or somebody, but not he!"

"Splendid! And Napoléon's plans, what would you do with them, eh? For, after all, Napoléon was a great fellow for making plans. He knew the value of a good *stage-setting*!"

"Oh! well, with all his good *stage-settings*, if he had gone on the stage, he would have made a failure of it; for think what he liked!—great God! what he liked! Old tragedies! stuff!"

"Dauberval, I say again you are unjust; he took what was given him. It was not his fault that Victor Hugo came later."

"Victor Hugo? He would have had him shot at Moscow when he signed the famous decree! Victor Hugo? Why, if he had n't had him shot as a simple clown, he would n't have understood a word of him!"

"You know nothing about it!"

"I know that in literature he had the ideas of a notary, and that in the strategic art his superiority is contested. Yes, it is. Have you read Charras?"

"Colonel Charras? A colonel who undertakes to tell an emperor his duty?"

"The vilest newspaper critic tells us actors our duty! But, leaving Victor Hugo out of the question, to return to Talma, to Talma,—I am not talking strategy now, I believe,—did Napoléon dare to

decorate Talma? Did he dare? Come, be frank, did he dare?"

"No, I am bound to admit that he did not dare. It was an instance of weakness. But at that time —"

"Yes, yes, I know — prejudice! But, if he had been the great man with whom our ears are filled, would n't he have made short work of the prejudice? Would n't he have trodden the prejudice under foot? I'm no drinker of blood, but Robespierre had stamped out many other prejudices."

"But Robespierre did not decorate Talma!"

"No, but — who knows? — he would have done it, perhaps, if he had lived. Why not? Louis XIV. would have done it."

"Louis XIV.?"

"To be sure, he did n't decorate Molière, because the Legion of Honor was not founded, but he invited him to breakfast. Did Napoléon ever invite Talma to breakfast?"

"Probably. Certainly. Talma invited him, by the way, when he was only an artillery officer! And then Talma, great man that he was, was not Molière!"

"He was Molière's equal, in his line. There are two men in Molière, the author of comedies and the actor. As an actor Talma was probably superior to him. However, let me tell you one thing." At

that point I thought that Dauberval was going mad. "You tire me with your Napoléon! You stand up for Napoléon, you believe in the legend! — You bear him no malice for having thrown that decree of his at our heads! You are nothing but a Bonapartist!"

"Dauberval!"

"A courtier — I don't know why you're not at the Comédie-Française as well as Giraudet. You deserve it!"

Marat, I tell you he was a perfect Marat. He glared at me with wild eyes. He was no longer Létorières nor Richelieu, nor the Prince d'Hennin, he was simply possessed with a devil. And Madame Dauberval, who had been listening in silence for some time, had risen and was trying to calm him, while Mademoiselle Louissette, in a corner, was repeating prayers more rapidly, more hurriedly than usual.

"Amédée, my dear Amédée!"

"Let me alone," he replied. "When a man at my age can act a part in his regular line as I have acted for you, and when he is slighted by the fault of an emperor, all those who stand up for that man are false friends! — false friends! — I repeat it!"

Thereupon I rose with dignity and said: —

"Dauberval, those are words that remorse will shout into your ears more than once in your dreams,

I verily believe. As for me, I go, and I tell you frankly it is no false exit."

In vain did Madame Dauberval beg me to remain.

"False friend, madame, false friend!" I replied.

And as I walked toward the door, the two women tried to stop me, saying to Dauberval:—

"Say a word to him, a single word, and he will remain!"

And it was true; I would have remained.

But what do you suppose were the words Dauberval said, — the words that came to his lips?

"Very good; let Brichanteau agree that Napoléon was an idiot!"

I am not a Bonapartist, as I have said before. But my heart remembers. So many recalls in that rôle! I, who had played Rémond in *L'Empereur et le Soldat*, say that Napoléon was an idiot! Wipe out my past at a single stroke! And in obedience to whom? To a superannuated, yes, superannuated comrade, over-excited, perhaps, by fire-water.

"Dauberval," I cried, — and I can still hear my voice ringing through the little house at Isle-Adam, and making the crockery dance upon the shelves, — "you demand a dastardly thing of me! Adieu!"

I had waved my hand in farewell, and yet I did not exactly want to go; but I had started. At one bound I crossed the threshold and found myself on the quay, the quay of the Oise, — alone!

I waited a moment in the darkness for them to call me back. After all, perhaps Dauberval was not responsible. A little alcohol at his age! I watched the water flowing by, the hurrying clouds, the tow-horses drawing a barge whose lantern shone in my eyes. No one called me back. I have learned since that the two women were busy bathing Dauberval's temples.

They were afraid of inflammation. I should have returned if I had known. But I walked mechanically toward the station, the team arrived, and I took my seat. When I reached Paris I thought of sending a despatch, then I said to myself, "Wait." And I waited. Dauberval made no sign of life. I was wounded, I became obstinate. We have never seen each other since. Never! never!

And Napoléon, up yonder, should be content. Yes, yonder at the Invalides. For his sake I have lost a friend, an old friend. For his sake, for refusing to assert that he was a fool, when it is my profound conviction that he was not a fool. Imbecile! If the Empire should be restored he would not decorate me for that. However, I would never ask him for anything; of that he may be sure.

Ah! that evening! that evening! I think of it with regret. It is one of the sad dates of my life. To fall out with a friend because of Napoléon! To lose an old comrade because of that devilish

Moscow decree ! It is heart-rending. I cannot get over it. And when I think of Dauberval it is as of a lost mistress. We shall meet again, perhaps. We will not talk about the Emperor. I will allow Dauberval to express his opinions, however paradoxical they may be. I will not answer, I will abstain from talking. Poor Dauberval ! Present or absent, I can say of him that he has filled and always will fill a large space in my heart !

VIII.

THE CASTING.

You understand, monsieur, I do not forget my oath, the oath I took before Montescure's plaster statue.

Indeed, the day that I assisted at the casting of my image was one of the most exciting in my whole life. You remember, of course, my statue, the one Montescure carved, with me for his model, the *Roman Passing under the Yoke*. Poor fellow !

The Municipal Council of his native town, urged on by Cazenave the deputy mayor, whom I had primed for the attack — you remember Cazenave ; you saw me talking with him in front of Montescure's last work, his legacy, — the Municipal Council had resolved to purchase the work, to have it cast in bronze, and to erect it on the public square of Garigat-sur-Garonne. I would have liked not to mention the name of the town. To name it is to give a clue to its chief magistrate, yes, the mayor, whose only idea in purchasing the statue was to bring a minister down for the dedication and make him produce a cross of the Legion from his pocket. It is quite a modern proceeding, a trick. It almost

always succeeds. For my own part, I utilized in the interests of justice and the reparation due to Montescure this fever for honors that caused the pulse of the mayor of Garigat-sur-Garonne to beat fast. And I ought to say that Cazenave, the deputy, seconded me with a devotion and self-abnegation worthy of a poet. I have told you that Cazenave writes verses. He is a *Félibre*.¹ Of the ill-fated Montescure, pupil of the École at Toulouse, and of the *Roman Passing under the Yoke*, the mayor, M. (I was about to give you his name, but he deserves only anonymity) thought no more than a fish thinks of an apple, as Hugo says. He had coolly let him starve while he lived; but, when he was dead, he remembered that he was born at Garigat-sur-Garonne, within two steps of Toulouse, and he said to himself that a dedication would show off the town and its chief magistrate. Hence the purchase of the *Roman Passing under the Yoke*, and the casting of the statue. And yet, I repeat, I had to work like a veritable devil, and Monsieur Cazenave to assist me with truly Félibrean ardor. I spurred him and spurred him on. I wrote him the equivalent of two octavo volumes in eloquent letters! But I had sworn! You remember I had said to

¹ Properly speaking, a poet in the *langue d'oc*, of the school of Roumanille and Mistral. In general, any man who contributes by his works, in verse or in prose, to the success of the Provençal renaissance. — LITTRÉ.

the plaster statue — No. 3773 in the catalogue —
“Montescure, you shall be avenged !”

When I learned one morning that the work of Claude-André Montescure, my portrait, — for it was practically a portrait of me, Brichanteau, a full-length portrait of me, — was to be erected on a public square of France, I confess that I could not restrain an involuntary thrill of pride. I, in my lifetime, reproduced in a statue ! It was a beautiful dream. It does not happen to everybody. Wellington was the only man who could, upon looking out of his window, contemplate himself beneath the helmet of Achilles. I, if my heart bade me do it, could go when I chose to Garigat-sur-Garonne and gaze at my image in bronze face to face. It is a flattering thing, you will admit. It is much more flattering than a photograph.

But, in my soul and conscience, I did not think of myself and of that apotheosis in the bright sunlight of Gascogne. No. I thought only of Montescure, I was concerned only for the memory of the poor consumptive musician of the Théâtre de Montmartre, the author of a *face* worthy of a sculptor of the Renaissance. You know me now, you know if I conceal the depths of my soul. I am a limpid creature, and I am proud of it.

I was therefore legitimately interested in finding out where and when the statue would be cast. I was well acquainted with a foreman in the establishment

of Thibaut, one Laurençot. The *Roman* was to be cast in his foundry and he promised to give me the word. I could not sleep. The casting! To see a casting close at hand! *Parbleu*, I had seen one! Indeed I had played the act of the casting in *Benvenuto Cellini* with Mélingue. I carried him the cup that he needed to complete his *Jupiter*, because the metal ran short—it had been stolen by Pagolo, as you know, little Pagolo, a young whelp. And I had myself played Benvenuto at Perpignan, and it was one of my triumphs, in spite of Baculard! Ah! when I cried: “My life for a hundred pounds of pewter!—Where can we find metal?—Wood is procured from beams and furniture. But copper?” I promise you the audience shuddered. They shuddered like a single person. But I had never seen a casting off the stage. It is always a mistake not to make a study of things after nature. Now, after I have seen metal in a state of fusion, I could speak Benvenuto’s lines with unexpected effect, with a more human, more profound sorrow. “*Ah! if blood could but be hardened into bronze!*” How I could say that to-day!

A casting! why, it is a whole drama in itself! My friend had notified me; I was to be at the Thibaut foundry, near the Arc de Triomphe, at eight o’clock in the morning. I was on hand. I pass through a long courtyard crowded with moulds, busts, and bas-

reliefs ; an employé asks me what I require ; I give my name, mentioning Laurençot, the foreman, and, through a vast shed used as a storehouse, where I can catch glimpses of incomplete things, legs of generals, giants' arms holding torches, trunks of angels with their wings, heads of bewigged magistrates, a pot-pourri of persons and divinities, débris of illustrious characters, plaster casts of old statues already dedicated or fragments of statues to be dedicated, odds and ends of monuments and great men — I reach the foundry where the operation of casting is to take place.

There were some curious spectators there, as for a dress rehearsal, invited by the founder, or delegated by the mayor of Garigat-sur-Garonne, — I cannot say which.

But I felt that no one of them experienced the same emotion as myself : in the first place, because I was thinking of poor Montesqure when he sent his *Roman* to the Salon, and secondly because I said to myself that it was I, Sébastien Brichanteau, whom they were about to cast ! I saw that one of those present made a movement and gazed fixedly at me. And I divined his thought.

"There is a man who strangely resembles Claude-André Montesqure's Roman warrior !" he was thinking.

And I longed to go to him and say : —

"It is not surprising; that warrior is myself?"

Perhaps you have never seen a casting, monsieur? The copper and zinc are melted in a sort of oven, that has been kept white hot for many hours, and like a stream of lava they pierce the bed of sand on which they rest at first, then trickle, in liquid form, through a sort of trench into a vat or receptacle which a crane worked by machinery picks up and empties, as if it were a pail, into the hollow mould prepared near by, on another bed of sand. You cannot see the mould, for it is buried, as it were, under a covering of bricks and earth. The statue is born and takes shape in a sort of tomb.

An old workman, familiar with the operation, dipped the end of an iron bar in the oven where the metals were melting. His hand and forearm were protected by an enormously thick glove, burns being very easily obtained in such work, as you can imagine, and very dangerous. And we all waited, with our eyes fixed on the trench through which the liquid was soon to escape in a state of fusion.

Whatever one may be doing, his actions resemble what we see on the stage. Say what you please, life is unwritten drama. I watched the trench as I have watched the curtain before it rose. Was the metal melting? Was it coming, or would it miss its *entrée*, I mean its exit! Come, clear the stage! And no one spoke; everybody was anxious. At last a few drops

of metal appeared, making rifts in the bed of sand, — incandescent lumps, so to speak, — and suddenly there were no more drops, but a luminous jet, all white, with red or green or yellow vapors, coppery vapors, — an enormous jet that leaps into the vat amid clouds of many-colored smoke ; a fantastic illumination, with a great spattering of tiny drops of yellow or purple fire. I had always regretted that I had never been present at an eruption of Vesuvius. But there it was before me — I have seen a volcanic eruption ! That stream of molten metal was a crater *in petto*, a flood of burning lava.

And I said to myself : —

“That metal, Brichanteau, is your image still in liquid form ! That bronze in fusion is your statue ! That blazing stream is perhaps your forehead ; those bursts of flame are from your eyes ! ”

A peculiar sensation. The stream cast fantastic reflections on the ceiling of the foundry, on the enormous machines, on the beams. A most excellent light for the Brocken scene if I ever should play *Faust*. And the massive heads of the workmen, the bare-armed founders, very calm in that severe labor, flushed or turned sallow, but remained always impassive in the gleam of those vapors of hell.

Then the receptacle of the metal was lifted bodily at the end of an enormous iron hook by a revolving crane which, when it reached a point just above

where the mould was waiting, emptied all that lava automatically through a tunnel, with a smooth, regular flow, into the hollow space formed by the earthen mould of the statue; and the liquid metal was moulded by the walls of that hollow, the gaping hole began to assume human shape; my image was born amid billows of green and red vapor, amid the streams of metal that leaped and bounded and rolled with every movement of the immense bucket that rapidly poured forth the burning liquid.

And at each bucketful that the crane lifted into the air, swinging the incandescent metal through the foundry, to empty it into the tunnel, I said to myself: —

“If there only is enough of the metal! The statue is a large one! It is an enormous statue! Will the metal give out, as in *Benvenuto*? Suppose the metal should give out!”

And strangely enough, my whole part came back to me, although I had not opened the book for years, — my whole part, as if I had read it over that very morning.

“Ah! *mon Dieu*! my brain is whirling, my knees give way, my eyes are blurred. Can it be that what I so dreaded is to happen? Can it be that my strength will come to an end before my work? No, no, I command thee to resist, thou iron body! Wilt thou not obey, inert matter?”

I was no longer in the foundry, I was on the stage. Once more Benvenuto became flesh in my person. I was not present as an anxious spectator at a toilsome task, but at a drama in which I was playing the leading rôle. I would have burned the beams of the studio or thrown my cane into the furnace so that the metal should not fail. It did not fail. Indeed there was a little too much, which was allowed to cool in the moulds. My friend the foreman said : —

“Excellent. That will do for the Brazilian general !”

A Brazilian general to whom honors were rendered for overthrowing the government he had founded. An equestrian statue, that, as it should be. When a man has overturned his own government !

In fact, nothing was lacking. There is no lack of metal or of statues to-day.

“Well, there’s your effigy completed, Brichanteau,” said the foreman, in an undertone, nudging me with his elbow.

I was cast like Cellini’s Jupiter.

It was a unique spectacle to me. I imagined myself taking shape under that covering of brick and stone ; I said to myself that I should soon appear from my grave beneath that masonry, — when the metal should have cooled, — in all the pride of the pose Montescure had given me. And it seemed to me that that fiery metal was blood, the lava of my veins, all that I have given to art, all that art has

taken from me, all that art has not given back to me !

But after all, what does it matter? I have had my hours, as I have often told you, and the casting of the *Roman Passing under the Yoke* is one of those hours, monsieur, one of the most memorable of all. I have been well loved in my life, often deceived, I might almost say always deceived, but well loved. Applauded I have been, as well. Much applauded. Frantically, sometimes. But neither love nor cheers have ever given me the delicious sensation that I experienced when I saw myself, first, in the form of lava, and secondly in the form of a statue.

“Yes, a few days later, when the metal had cooled, they broke the shell of masonry in which it was enclosed. Laurençot had invited me again to see that process. I may say that, after experiencing, as I looked at the mound where my image was buried, a sensation analogous to that of Charles V. attending his own burial, I felt a satisfaction that the omnipotent rival of Hernani never had, could never have had. Think of this, imagine this: more blessed than my most illustrious contemporaries, I have seen myself emerge from the earth in the form of a statue.

I leaned over the trench in which lay Montescure's *Roman*, and, gazing at that pure brow, those contracted eyebrows, I said to myself—ay, better than that, I cried aloud, before Thibaut's whole force:—

“It is I!”

And it was I, in truth! And everybody recognized it and recognized me, — everybody, from Monsieur Thibaut himself to Laurençot, his foreman. It was a protest against the injustice of Art, represented by a vanquished sculptor with the features of one protesting against the bitterness of defeat. It was myself, with all my untamed ardor and all the obstinacy of my courage.

I leaned over that great brazen image, lying there in the open trench, as I had seen, after the Commune, the French Cæsar lying on the pile of débris in Place Vendôme; but my image was intact, and I said to myself, by way of consolation for my disappointments: —

“Wipe your eyes, Brichanteau! Or if ever you weep with rage, be proud, Brichanteau, my friend, for you have there glory that Musset does not know, and never will know perhaps. Soldier of art, you will stand in the public square, with the features of a soldier of the fatherland.”

Ah! what joy was mine that day! — joy mingled with sadness, for I thought, I thought all the time of poor Montescure, and my eyes were dimmed with tears, not of anger but of pity. Oh! you could have seen them; they were there, I promise you, they were there. But enough!”

I had at that time an illusion that I should witness,

soon after the casting, the dedication of the monument at Garigat-sur-Garonne. I really believed in the dedication. But politics must meddle in everything and crush the noblest artistic manifestations.

The mayor of Garigat-sur-Garonne, being suspected of some knavery or other, was deposed by the Minister of the Interior, and the Municipal Council protested against all the plans of the unfaithful magistrate, — all his plans, *even*, so ran the resolution, *against the best*.

And the best of all his plans was assuredly the erection of Montescure's statue on the square of his native place. It would have been superb. Monsieur Falguière had been asked to come down and preside at the ceremony in costume, and the prefect had promised to be present with a general of division. I had obtained a piece of poetry from one of the editors of the *Dépêche de Toulouse*, and he had written it in the expectation of receiving therefor the ribbon of an officer of the Academy. Furthermore, Cazenave, Cazenave the deputy, had composed expressly for the occasion a little play for two persons, *La Muse et le Sculpteur*, to be performed in one of the halls at the mayoralty.

And I, who was ambitious of no preferment, proposed to recite something before my own image at the public festivities in the open air, and I had even made some notes for a lecture which I would have

been glad to deliver at the theatre of Garigat-sur-Garonne, or at any wine-shop in town if there were no theatre there : —

“ One of the Vanquished of Art, study by one who protests against the injustice of the stage. Sculpture and the Theatre. The Marble and the Boards.”

And I would have told my contemporaries some truths on that day, I believe !

Some one might have asked me by what right I assumed to speak.

“ What ! by what right ? ” I would have answered. “ Look at Montescure’s *Roman*. That Roman is myself ! ”

And in front, in profile, in general effect, it is I. I symbolize all griefs, all protests, all vengeance.

The hatred of the Municipal Council for the mayor has thus far prevented any ceremony. Moreover, one of those wretched so-called primordial questions suddenly arose, vulgar but decisive. Montescure’s native town has no money. It has no money to defray the final expenses, to pay the cost of the base as estimated by the architect. It was a paltry sum, but the question of the statue having become a political question, everything was suspended. If the treasury had been full to overflowing, they would not have voted the money, in order to administer a final cuff to the discredited mayor ? The poor devil who dreamed of the red ribbon ! So the pedestal is in place at Gari-

gat-sur-Garonne, but there is no Roman on the pedestal. Evil fortune pursues Montescure even beyond the tomb, and my image does not stand, as it deserves, in the bright sunlight.

Ah ! politics ! Politics and money, — disgusting, inevitable money !

And the statue remains at Garigat-sur-Garonne, in a shed, as Lord Byron's long remained and, it may be, still remains in the London Custom-House, as Monsieur Thiers' has unhappily been relegated to a corner of the Museum at Marseille.

And I await the reparation due to the hapless Montescure ; I await the day when my image, veiled at first, shall finally appear beneath the Southern sky, to the notes of the *Marseillaise*. But I have an idea. I mean to organize, I am now organizing, a gala performance at the Théâtre des Batignolles, for the benefit of Montescure's statue. It is decided. My programme is made out. All the great names appear. I will beg, I will scheme, I will ascend the carpeted stairs of my comrades who have *succeeded* ! I will enact for another the exhausting rôle of beneficiary ! I will hold out, for others, this loyal hand that has never asked aught from anybody ! I will be the Beggar for the Vanquished, — it would be a fine title, — as I have been the *Children's Doctor* and the *Poor Man's Lawyer* !

And when I have supplied the municipality of Gar-

igat-sur-Garonne with the funds of which it stands in need, I may rest content with my work and say to the spectre of the Montmartre musician : —

“Are you satisfied, Montescure ! Has not Brichanteau the actor kept his oath ? ”

On that day, which will surely dawn at last, for I have sworn it, I will forget all the mortifications of my life. I shall be repaid. And I trust that I shall be allowed to add one last paragraph to my lecture : —

“*The Bronze and the Drama.* Study of the life and works of Claude-André Montescure, sculptor, and of Sébastien Brichanteau, his model.”

IX.

THE LATE PANAZOL.

POOR Panazol is dead ! We attended his body, the other morning, to the cemetery at Montmartre, where he had purchased a lot long ago and erected a little monument to suit his own taste, — a cheerful monument, the estimates for which he examined himself and superintended its erection, going to the marble yard exactly as he went to rehearsals. Panazol, who had always been neat and elegant in his attire, was determined that that last garment of stone should be in consonance with his life.

A man of great talents was Panazol ! For my part, I was very fond of him. A little *old-fashioned*, with a tremolo in his voice and his hand invariably thrust into his hair when he made a declaration of love ; but a genuine *jeune premier*, who knew how to kiss a woman's hand as nobody else did, and to kneel without making himself ridiculous. Ah ! I have depicted passions, but Panazol could give me points ! Rivals on the stage, rivals in society, but always friends, good friends.

And he is dead. He had left the stage in the full vigor of his powers. The devil of a fellow — he might have run a long career, but he did not want to grow old. To change his line would have seemed a dishonorable thing to him. He was used to being loved, he wanted to be loved always. On the day when he discovered that he had too many gray hairs and a tooth that was decaying, he gave his farewell performance, made his bow to the public, wept a little and retired to Asnières, to a small house, but dainty like himself, and there he lived, saying to himself: —

“There are no *jeunes premiers* left!”

His monument at Montmartre interested him infinitely. He busied himself with having carved upon it a list of his best rôles, in two columns divided by an extinct torch, — torch of glory, or torch of love, I know not which; Panazol is no longer here to tell us. He died last week, in his little house at Asnières, — and it is wrong to say that one's comrades of the stage are ungrateful; we were there, a considerable number of us, before the doorway draped in black, and we almost all accompanied him from Asnières to Montmartre.

To tell the truth, it was a very mild day; winter seemed to have declared a truce. We found old friends there, old, very old comrades, men and women, old women with white hair, who had formerly been pretty brunettes or lovely blondes. We said to one

another: "Ah! Angèle, or Irène, or Martinard, or Durandel! Dear Chevrier! Dear Duverdy!" For they were all, I tell you, almost all, the late Panazol's comrades! Panazol had never been jealous or stern or ill-natured. We remembered him pleasantly and we brought him flowers.

Ah! he had a fine funeral! — with some unforeseen episodes, I ought to say. The family — it consisted of one nephew only — had placed at our disposal two funeral omnibuses, to take us from Asnières to Montmartre. A very modern invention that. And very convenient when you are with people you know well. If it's a long ride you can talk. Luckily, we were all well acquainted. Yes, there was Duverdy, former third rôle at the Gaieté, Martinard, who played comic parts, Topinet, excellent in the rôle of a doting old man, and women, young women and women past their prime, the latter because they had known Panazol — loved him, perhaps; who knows? — the younger ones because they were inquisitive and hoped that some reporter would put their names in his paper.

Behold us *en route*, in our omnibus, elbow to elbow, knee to knee, slightly crowded.

"Full!" said Duverdy.

"No transfers!" rejoined Topinet.

We were not very lively at first. Through the windows of the omnibus and over the black cruppers

of the horses we could see the funeral car advancing slowly, slowly, covered with wreaths that were tossed up and down by the jolting over the pavements. As we crossed the bridge we looked at the Seine rolling by, its gray stream made muddy by the rain.

Some one observed : —

“ This would n't be a very good day for rowing ! ”

Whereupon one of the women replied : —

“ Oh ! hardly anybody rows nowadays ! They ride the bicyclette ! ”

“ Very bad exercise for women,” said Chevrier. “ They will find it out later.”

“ And for men too, young men especially,” added Martinard. “ It makes them hunchbacked ! ”

I said nothing myself, although I am generally ready to talk ; I was listening. I was lost in thought. I listened and thought of Panazol. I saw him again, young, brilliant, impassioned, his eyes flashing fire, playing Montéclair in *La Closerie des Genêts* at Versailles, and giving me my cue in *Hernani* at Montpellier. I, *Hernani* ; he, *Don Carlos* ! A fine evening ! And now poor Panazol, so applauded by the public, adored by women, was jolting slowly along in his last oaken bed toward the little stone house, whose plan, shape, and foundation he had discussed with the architect.

And I found that no one said much about him in that funeral omnibus, which, having passed the forti-

fications, was now following the long, broad, desolate streets of the suburbs. No, they did not say much about him, not enough indeed.

"Poor Panazol!" I suddenly exclaimed, pointing to some men who removed their hats as the cortège passed. "It 's the last time any one will salute him!"

"Oh! yes," said Martinard with a laugh, "those salutes gave me a deuce of a lesson in modesty the other day, on my word! Fancy that, as I was going down Avenue de l'Opéra, toward the Palais-Royal, my former temple, I met a gentleman who took off his hat. Good. 'There's some one who knows me,' I said to myself. I returned his salutation and kept on my way. Two steps beyond, another gentleman, another salute. I took off my hat politely. A third gentleman coming toward me, a third salute. 'Well, well,' I said to myself, 'this is fame, pure fame!' And I thought: 'After all, Martinard, the public has n't forgotten you, although the photographs of younger men have taken the place of yours in the stationers' shop-windows!' And I was proud, yes, on my word, proud as you please. Suddenly I passed a lady, who, as she approached me, made the sign of the cross. A flash of light. I turned. Do you know what I was doing, my children? — I was walking a few steps in front of a hearse, covered with flowers like this one, which was going down Avenue

de l'Opéra on its way to Montparnasse. The salutations were addressed to the dead. My fame was simply courtesy to the defunct. And so, as I said before, the incident reinforced my modesty ! ”

“ That ’s a very good story,” observed Topinet. “ Old Martinard ! He ’s always on his mettle ! He ’s the man to tell a story — oh ! he is ! ”

And the women began to laugh.

Reminiscences of the stage. Evocation of years gone by. And the “ Do you remember ? Did you see me ? ” or “ Did you see him ? ”

We raked up anecdotes about Panazol, his beginnings, his youth. Duverdy recalled the years of hardship endured by our Panazol, who was to be so applauded later !

“ When I think that I played in *La Tour de Nesle* with him ! ”

“ *La Tour de Nesle ?* ”

“ *La Tour de Nesle.* And Panazol played Gaultier d'Aulnay ! ”

“ Panazol, the king of fashion, in tights ! in peaked shoes ! — I would have liked to see him ! ”

That *tights* came in so drolly, uttered like a sigh by Irène Gauthier, once so pretty — ah ! yes, the hussy ! — that the whole omnibus laughed. To think of the poor dead man, who was being jolted along through the streets, to think of him in Middle-Age doublet and tights, half pink and half purple !

And Duverdy, who was very glad of an opportunity to put himself forward, — the holder of a diploma in *belles lettres* was Duverdy, who had dropped his prey for its shadow, and was now a disgruntled strolling player, — Duverdy went on to tell his story of *La Tour de Nesle*. It was an amusing story, by the way.

“That performance of *La Tour de Nesle* at Lille was one of our pleasant memories, Panazol's and mine ! Pleasant because I made it pleasant, for the evening began coldly, very coldly. In the first place there was snow in the air, and snow, oh ! snow is the death of the theatre, it's a pneumatic machine for the box-office and gives a whole audience the rheumatism. We were playing *La Tour de Nesle* — January 30th. I have a memory like a pedometer. I had consented to play Orsini ; my line at that time was Buridan, but I let Dalvimar take it, as he had asked it of me as a favor. The daughter of a bailiff on Rue Esquermoise, who was in love with him, was determined to marry him in spite of her family, and she took her parents to the theatre to prove to them that Dalvimar had a future before him.”

The whole audience was already much amused by the story.

“That's very good ! The examination for marriage !”

"Was Dalvimar engaged by the bailiff?"

"He was that. And after marrying him his wife ran away with a tenor from the Grand Théâtre!"

"Never trust a female bailiff!"

And while the passers-by saluted Panazol's funeral-car, Duverdy continued his story, declaimed it, put it on the stage and mouthed a little *in my style*, when I am in a talkative mood.

"So I was playing Orsini. I played it well. But that audience of pasteboard, that audience of stone seemed frozen stiff. It didn't budge an inch. In vain did I roll my eyes and my *r's*, it 'made no more sound than a piece of wood.' Said poor Panazol: 'Suppose we hand them some warming-pans?' Not a single hit. The second tableau, in the tower, came to an end without a shudder. And yet it was in that tableau that I said, with a telling accent—I am proud of it: 'A glorious night for a debauch in the tower! The sky is dark, the rain is falling, the city is asleep! The river rises as if to go to meet the bodies of the dead! 'T is glorious weather to love! Without, the pealing of the thunder! Within, the clinking of glasses, and kisses and words of love! A strange concert, wherein God and Satan each have their part!' Those phrases have resonance and grandeur in your ears. But *basta!*—the good people of Lille heard nothing. They did not see the grandeur. They did not feel. I was furious,—oh!

furious ! Panazol tried to calm me, in the wings. Useless ! I fumed and fumed. But suddenly an idea passed through my mind : ‘ These people must be interested ! The Paris of Louis le Hutin and Enguerrand de Marigny does n’t appeal to them ; very good, then we ’ll talk to them about Lille, the blackguards ! You will see, my good Flemish audience, you will see ! ’ I waited till the fourth act, Orsini’s tavern, the same stage-setting as in the first act ; and at the rising of the curtain, when Orsini is alone and cries : ‘ Go to, meseems that there is naught to do this evening at the Tour de Nesle ; ’t is better so, for all this blood that has been shed must surely fall on some one, and woe to him whom God shall choose to undergo this expiation ! ’ — I did not hesitate, I improvised a speech, a speech of my own ; I stitched it to the text of Dumas Père and Gailardet, and I went on : ‘ Yes, woe to him who shall be chosen for this expiation, for the hour of justice draws nigh, and when the Austrian bullets rained upon the suburbs of Lille, when in a memorable siege the gunners of Lille in 1792 heroically withstood the foreigner, well might they think that God would no more punish the invader than he has hitherto punished Marguerite de Bourgogne ; but the haughty Austrian archduchess who hoped to reduce Lille to ashes was foiled, in history and before posterity, and I, Orsini, the humble inn-keeper of Porte Saint-

Honoré, declare that Lille, the heroic city of Lille, has deserved well of the country! — Ah! my children, then you should have seen the effect! — The audience rose as if aroused, inflamed, by an electric spark. Cheers, stamping, and shouts of: '*Encore ! Encore ! Vive le siège de Lille ! Bravo, Orsini !*' I tried to speak. Impossible. They cried again and again: '*Encore ! encore !*' Faith, I did n't stand on ceremony. I repeated my words. I spoke again of the gunners of Lille, of the shells, of 92, and the same deafening clamor arose when I had finished. At that moment my comrade Lardenoy, Marie Lardenoy, who played Marguerite, knocked again and again at the door. It was time for her *entrée*. I said: '*Who goes there ?*' — '*Open !*' — '*The queen, alone at this hour ?*' And the queen entered. She began to speak the words of the play. She was awaiting Buridan. She dismissed Orsini. '*Leave me alone.*' And I replied: '*If the Queen has need of me her servant will be at hand !*' — '*'Tis well. But let the servant remember that he must hear naught !*' That was her rejoinder. To which I had to reply, '*He will be deaf as he will be dumb,*' and then exit. But I thought it very tame to make my exit after that sentence, and I added, again amid the acclamations of the whole theatre: '*He will be deaf as he will be dumb, except when the memory of the siege of Lille shall make his heart beat high with*

pride !' Thereupon, my children, this thing happened — for the only time perhaps in the history of the stage — Orsini, a subordinate third rôle, immediately took first place in the minds of the audience, and the whole applauding, stamping hall shouted for *Orsini ! Orsini !* during the great scenes between Marguerite and Buridan.

“ 'T is not the gypsy,' said Marguerite, recoiling, — 'No, 't is the captain !' Buridan replied. But the audience yelled : 'No gypsy ! No captain ! Orsini ! Orsini ! Orsini ! Or-si-ni !' They must have Orsini, they demanded Orsini. Orsini every moment ! Orsini *forever !* Observe that Orsini does n't appear again except to say, '*Yes, madame,*' and escort Marguerite to the dungeon in the Grand-Châtelet where Buridan is confined in chains, in the *fourth* to receive an order, and in the *fifth* to commit a final crime. But on that occasion he had to appear in every tableau, almost in every scene, and to inject, even in the Louvre, some reminder of the siege of Lille. Thus, at the review of the troops by Louis X., when the officer of the guards cried : 'Make way for the king ! Make way for the queen ! Make way for the prime minister !' Orsini added : 'Make way for the memory of our dear city of Lille that faced shot and shell so bravely !' Ah ! my children, that was a unique evening, a memorable evening ! I wish you may have many such ! Our poor Panazol con-

stantly spoke of it whenever I saw him. I have always had the knack of melting a frozen audience ! But it takes presence of mind, you see ! ”

“ And erudition ! ” said I, mechanically, thinking of Compiègne and the famous performance of Louis XI.

“ And impudence,” said Martinard.

“ And there you are,” concluded Topinet.

The audience at the Lille theatre was not the only thing that Duverdy had melted, for the whole funeral omnibus went through the same process. We had now reached the chapter of old memories. They rose like coveys of partridges. Martinard described his provincial tours, Topinet gave imitations of his colleagues in days gone by. He had known Grassot, who amused a whole generation by shaking his right hand like a man with the palsy, and saying : “ *Gnouf ! gnouf !* ” Topinet repeated, “ *Gnouf ! gnouf !* ” like Grassot. And everybody laughed. Each one told his own experiences. As we were disputing about an old couplet that Arnal sang in *Riche d'Amour*, Irène Gauthier, who had once had a sweet voice, began to sing it. And Durandet, waxing eloquent over the *couplets de facture*, which, he said, ought not to be neglected as they were, quoted a multitude of them, — sentimental couplets, amusing couplets — and did it so well that the whole omnibus applauded, and from time to time rang with shouts of laughter.

"Do you remember his phrasing in *Le Piano de Berthe*?"

And some one would repeat the lines.

"And this one, do you know it?"

Thereupon Durandet would sing another: —

" Mes bons amis,
Mes chers amis,
Vive la vie,
Et la folie !"

to the air of *J'en guette un petit de mon âge*, or *Le Carillon de Dunkerque*.

Then they started a chorus. Panazol was forgotten! It was like a picnic in the country. If it had been summer, we should have halted for refreshment at some wine-shop. We were very lively.

"Listen to this," said Topinet, singing to the tune of *Voilà le vrai troupier français*: —

" Voilà, voilà, voilà, voilà,
Voilà l'enterrement parfait !"

As we approached our journey's end, however, we laughed less. We arrived at the Montmartre cemetery. Very gravely now, walking slowly, with our sorrowful expressions, we followed with measured step the funeral car to the bit of earth where we were about to part from our friend forever. We walked among the graves, not losing sight of the bearers, to the spot where the monument stands, erected in his lifetime by good Panazol. A stone, laid beside the

yawning trench, and a marble shaft, neatly fluted, with the two columns of rôles separated by the famous extinct torch, and above, among the carved laurel-wreaths, this name, this simple name, cut in letters of gold, — with an *alpha* and an *omega* above (two Greek letters, as perhaps you know), — the name so often printed upon the posters of the Morris pillars: PANAZOL.

He is there !

The cortège halts. We stand about in a circle, jostling one another to obtain places near the orators who are to speak. I glance at the orators. They are Valbousquet — the *jeune premier comique* of the Folies-Dramatiques — who is to speak in the name of the younger generation and salute the veteran of the theatrical battles of the old days, and Maurevel, who is to speak first in the name of the Association of Dramatic Artists. A well-read man, Maurevel, man of letters in his leisure hours, and he has published a volume of reminiscences, — *During the Entr'Acte : Opinions and Studies*. I commend it to you.

I watch them, I study them. When one is no longer on the stage, one takes his turn at being a spectator.

Maurevel has a solemn air, and little Valbousquet is very pale, as pale as his white cravat. It is the first time he has ever buried any one ; he is agitated. Maurevel, an old stager, has more self-possession.

He has followed so many funeral processions ! And then he knows how to talk. He has lectured at the Batignolles Athenæum on the art of diction and the thoughts of poets, and is the author of divers reports to the Association of Artists.

The priest repeats the prayers and blesses the grave. The orators step forward. Panazol, stretched out on his bier, is about to witness the apotheosis of his life of toil. I must say that we were all moved. Yes, all. As much so as little Valbousquet. Even those who had laughed the loudest just before in the omnibus, even they felt a tightness about the heart. As I saw Maurevel advance, erect and dignified, with his paper in his hand and his arm extended, a huge arm, trimmed with astrakhan like the collar of his top-coat, I said to myself : —

“ Dear Panazol, listen and be content ! It is *your last !* ”

And now Maurevel begins. Never in my life shall I forget what he said. He has a fine resonant voice, less startling than mine ; it would not have made Monsieur Beauvallet jealous, but it's a fine voice. “ Messieurs,” he said, and that *Messieurs* filled the cemetery, imposed silence, —

“ Messieurs, the man we mourn, our talented, most rarely talented comrade, whom we attend to his last abode, was, in the fullest meaning of the term, an artist, a creator, an actor. He was not content to be

an ornament to his profession, he honored it. If Panazol has died with his head crowned with green laurel but without the red ribbon in his buttonhole, it is because he was an artist and not an office-holder, and because he never solicited that arbitrary symbol of transitory worth, which has descended, borne upon the wings of favor, upon too many breasts whose just claim to it may be contested."

The phrase created an impression. It is generally cold in the cemetery, but there are mute thrills that are worth as much as flattering murmurs.

"It is, then, messieurs, an actor, and nothing but an actor, a comrade, and nothing but a comrade, whom we escort to-day on his journey to that field of rest to which we all must go. Having been a witness of the life and triumphs of our illustrious comrade, it falls to my lot to render impartial homage to Panazol, to his merits, to his worth, in the face of all men. Rejected at all the examinations of the Conservatory, Jean-Jacques-Edgar Panazol was, we may say, the son of his own labor and his talent. He made himself, he created himself.

"I knew him in his youth, and I shared my rôles with him, I can fairly say, without jealousy, without vanity, without objection. He was then in that period of hesitation which all of us—or almost all—have passed through, and in which we study ourselves, our qualities and our defects, with close

attention. These defects were numerous in Panazol. A pronunciation often defective, a gait which I will describe as incorrect, a timidity which bordered on awkwardness, gave as yet no promise of the actor that Panazol eventually became. You will forgive me, my dear comrade, you will pardon my loyal frankness, nay, rather you would have urged it upon me, you would have demanded it of me yourself. In these days I shall not astonish you, I shall astonish nobody by saying — it may well be admitted after so many glorious triumphs — that you were, except on rare occasions, notoriously bad ! ”

Stupefaction among the audience. We looked at one another, somewhat terrified.

But Maurevel, brushing aside all our amazement and raising his great arm with its circle of astrakhan, continued : —

“ If I make that statement, my old friend, it is that I may with the more force proclaim the victories you won after that period of hesitation and ill-fortune. What charming evenings we owe to you ! What emotions ! What noble memories !

“ Beyond question, messieurs, Panazol often made the mistake of attempting certain rôles for which he was not fitted. We remember the ill-success, exaggerated and unjust be it said, that he met with in D'Artagnan. But what a characteristic stamp of his individuality he imprinted upon the rôle of the pa-

triot suspected of treason in *Le Bourgeois de Gand* ! He made the mistake — being physically adapted for *jeune premier rôles* in *genre* comedies, light, artificial comedies — of attempting one fine day, through caprice, to attack the classical repertory. There his absolute lack of all preliminary study was too painfully apparent. But, in compensation, what exquisite gifts, what original ideas he developed when he gave the rein to his own instincts and his inventions, which I would describe as showing genius, yes, messieurs, as showing genius, had they not been so fitful and irregular !

“Moreover, what exquisite taste he had for costuming his rôles ! What a cunning cut to his coats ! And how truly it has been said, perhaps in malice, that he owed the best part of his talents to his tailor ! As if it were a simple matter, messieurs, to invite a tailor to share our applause !

“All these souvenirs of triumphs, all these names of victories, Jean-Jacques Panazol determined to place in yonder marble list that shines resplendent on his tomb. Mingling with these phantoms of glory, the torch and the smoke of love, he thought best, with touching solicitude for his own renown, to carve in stone the list of his successes. Perhaps there are rôles that posterity would efface from yonder shaft. Yes, beyond doubt. But it is not for us to touch them. Time alone can erase the inscriptions written

by men. When we have to deal with a friend, his glory and his vanity, we ought above all things to respect them.

“And for that reason,” concluded Maurevel, “without carrying further the study of an honored career, I will content myself with offering him we have lost the affectionate and profoundly sincere remembrance and the tears of those who survive him. Adieu, Panazol! Au revoir, thou who wast, ere the inevitable wrinkles came, the model of *jeunes premiers*! To our speedy meeting, my old friend!”

Thereupon Maurevel wiped away with the back of his sleeve a tear that lost itself in the astrakhan cuff, and, rolling up the sheets he had read, resumed his place among the spectators who were grouped about the trench, seeking approbation that did not come.

“Why, that’s no funeral oration, it’s a harsh criticism,” said Duverdy.

“He put some vinegar in his holy water,” suggested Irène Gauthier.

For my part I was stupefied. Poor Panazol! So this is your apotheosis! Your mausoleum heard some severe words! I looked at the dead man’s nephew, a great red-faced, sheepish fellow from the provinces. He thanked Maurevel. He thought that Maurevel had spoken finely of his uncle. He had not understood. Ah! these heirs!

His old friends and I exchanged heartbroken

glances. But it was much worse when little Valbousquet came forward toward the tomb, to speak.

He was even paler than before, was little Valbousquet, frightfully excited, and we could see nothing but his long, pointed, red nose in his pale, oval face, which protruded from a white silk handkerchief like Pierrot's from his *collerette*. He walked forward with a *hum ! hum !* to make sure of his voice, and, fumbling in the pocket of his overcoat, he produced a roll of paper which he unfolded mechanically, his lip slightly raised by a nervous contraction.

As he unfolded the paper the poor fellow trembled like a leaf.

"He won't be able to read," said some one behind me, "he surely won't."

Valbousquet did not even look at his paper ; he rolled his great eyes about, as a *débutant*, choked with agonized dread, looks about the hall that is waiting to devour him. Indeed he was a little too slow about beginning to speak, and the spectators were beginning to stamp their feet on the damp ground. But suddenly Valbousquet resolved to say something, and, casting his eyes upon his open paper, —

"Who am I?" he cried. "Who am I? Do you not see me? I am the Dictionary — even so! The *Dictionary of the Academy*!"

What? What was that he was saying? Valbousquet had no sooner uttered those words than we gazed at one another with a stupefied air.

The Dictionary! Had Valbousquet gone mad? The *Dictionary of the Academy*? Apropos of Panazol, our comrade Panazol? We knew not what to think. A shell, yes, a shell falling among us, would not have stupefied us more.

And Valbousquet went on: —

“Ah! it is not often that any one reads me through! But the truth must be told; when I am finished they begin me over again. I am the *Perpetual Dictionary*, the *Everlasting Dictionary*, the *Diction* —”

But suddenly Valbousquet stopped, struck his forehead violently, beat himself with fierce fingers, until he caused a broad red spot to appear, and cried aloud in apologetic tones: —

“Forgive me! Oh! I pray you, forgive me! I made a mistake! — ah! I was insane! Pardon me! I ask your pardon, mesdames and messieurs! It is my rôle, not my discourse, — my rôle!”

Valbousquet had made a mistake in the pocket. He had unfolded, instead of the farewell to Panazol he had prepared, one of the rôles he was rehearsing at the Folies-Dramatiques, in which he played the *Dictionary of the Academy*, the *Microbe*, and the *Phonograph*. And now it was useless for him to speak of the talent and virtues of Panazol, the

example set by Panazol, for nobody listened to him. He was run out, ended as an orator, was Valbousquet. He was destined thenceforth to be called nothing but the *Little Dictionary*.

Duverdy, standing behind me, said : —

“That mistake was amusing all the same ; very droll, excellent stage business !”

“And not so spiteful as Maurevel’s little paper,” replied Irène Gauthier. “What a walking gallows that Maurevel is !”

And that is the way we buried Panazol, poor Panazol, a good friend, one of the glories of our profession !

While Valbousquet was talking I had heard laughter here and there — stifled through respect for the cemetery. But it would have taken very little more for us to fill with bursts of joyous laughter, with volleys of gayety, that little corner of Montmartre, as we had filled the funeral omnibus. A most amusing funeral ! In vain did Valbousquet lower his voice and say with pathetic quavers, “Adieu, dear and venerated master !” Nobody listened to him, and nobody saw him except with the features of the character he was to assume : “Who am I ? I am the Dictionary !”

We sprinkled holy water in the open grave and defiled before the nephew, who did not know a single one of us and eyed us with the sullen suspicion with which honest bourgeois regard theatrical folk.

We went to look at the tombs in the vicinity: Regnier's, Samson's, Lockroy's, Laferrière's — there are many of the men of a bygone age who lie sleeping there under the gray stones. We cannot visit them often, but when an opportunity offers we make the most of it.

As we went away I offered my arm to Irène Gauthier, who walked with difficulty because of her rheumatism.

"When I am gone," she said, "I want none of these floods of eloquence! If you survive me, my old Brichanteau, just bring me a two-sou bunch of violets! That is worth more than all such stuff as this! Poor Panazol!"

He had loved her, I think. Perhaps she had loved him.

At the cemetery gate she said to me, —

"I leave you here. It is time for rehearsal. I too, am in the play at the Folies, like that idiot of a Valbousquet!"

I looked at the old woman, fat, wrinkled, bloated, palsied, with gray hair tinged with yellow.

"Yes," she said to me, reading my thoughts, "I am in the play. But I don't act; I am trier-on. One must live as one can, and I am a costumer! What would you have me do, my poor old friend? that's better than being a box-opener or a rag-picker!"

She returned to the funeral omnibus, giving the driver the address of the Folies-Dramatiques. The omnibus was at the service of the guests for the whole day; Panazol's nephew had paid in advance.

Poor Panazol! I agree with Irène Gauthier; when I am buried let there be no discourse pronounced over my grave, or else let my friends be content to read what I have composed myself — making no mistake as to the paper! That is the surest way!

But stay; Panazol still had one last posthumous mortification to undergo. As I was about leaving the gate of the dead men's field, another funeral procession arrived, — some sort of a hearse, with the usual flowers and regulation hangings, — and when he caught sight of it, the keeper of the cemetery gave a signal on a whistle¹ that he put to his lips.

The strident sound, tearing the air, went to my heart. And instinctively, monsieur, turning toward the paths we had just left, and trying to descry, through the trees and tombs, the distant — and invisible — spot, where our departed comrade lay, my indignation found vent in these words, which were the best of funeral orations, the protest of an old friend's heart: —

“My poor Panazol! This is the first time you were ever hissed.”¹

¹ *Sifflet*, a hiss or a whistle, derived from *siffler*, which means to hiss or to whistle.

But how true is the thought of Shakespeare, to which I gave expression in my deepest voice, as Gonzague in *Hamlet* : —

“ Oh ! la réalité trahit toujours le rêve,
Et, contraire à nos vœux, notre destin s'achève
En ce monde changeant, où, sans exagérer,
Les larmes savent rire et les rires pleurer ! ”

Which means in simple prose, that the vaudeville is very near the melodrama in our wandering fools' existence, and that the operetta elbows tragedy at every step. *Voilà.*

X.

SHOOTING STARS.

SHAKESPEARE? — I told no falsehood when I said to Lady Maud on the terrace of the Chateau at Pau that it was the dream of my life to act Shakespeare. It is, by the way, a pleasure that I have enjoyed between two melodramas of Pixérécourt, Bouchardy, or D'Ennery. But, romanticist that I am, I must not be unjust to Molière! I am a Moliérist too, monsieur! Molière and Shakespeare, they are the two poles of our art, — Molière more clear, Shakespeare more full of life. I should not hesitate to say that the great Will and the great Poquelin are the grandfathers of the stage: between them stand Racine and Corneille, of whom I would say, like that critic whose name I forget: Racine more feminine, Corneille more Roman; Corneille is *papa*, and Racine *mamma*. Is that clear?

There was a time, I must admit, when I sacrificed Shakespeare to Molière. I had a sharp attack of Moliérism. It was when, feeling the ground slip from beneath my feet in my own country, I thought of seeking the bread of glory in foreign lands. Duncan the American had said to me: "In the North the French *melo* does n't succeed. You can play your

repertory in Brazil, Peru, or the Argentine. The North likes to laugh. Do you act Molière?"

What a question! I would act anything. Regular lines of parts are chains imposed on individual temperaments by mediocrities. Act Molière? As if I had not rehearsed and acted him at the Conservatory, in the days of Monsieur Beauvallet! I had even passed in *Alceste* at the semi-annual examinations.

One can enunciate and thunder as well in the monologue of *L'Avare* as in the strophes of *Le Cid*. Act Molière? Monsieur Beauvallet, who wanted no doubt to get rid of me by shunting me off in comedy, thought that I acted him well. "You can't imagine," he would often say to me in his loud voice, "how comic you are! You are unconsciously a born *comique*, Brichanteau!" I said to myself: "He is jealous. He's afraid of you!" Perhaps I was mistaken. I often wonder if my professor was not right.

However, I answered Monsieur Duncan that Molière was in my line. He wanted an amusing repertory. He should have an amusing repertory.

"Oh! as amusing as possible," said my Yankee.

"But you don't expect me to sing *chansonnettes*, I trust?"

"Ha! ha!" said he, "that would n't be so bad!"

I did not sing *chansonnettes*, but I plunged into Molière. In the first place, I tried *L'École des Femmes* at Chartres. A brilliant success. I gave

them an Arnolphe as dashing as a Don Diego. Genius, by the way, is a unit. Alceste is an Othello whom Arsinoé drives to jealousy as Iago drives the Moor. Those Titans of one race know everything. Did not an old master-at-arms once tell me that the best of lessons in fencing was that that the master of the sword gives Monsieur Jourdain in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*? And it is true. Where have I read that Shakespeare studied madness as thoroughly as Monsieur Charcot himself? And that must be true. Again, consider the advice given to actors by Molière in *L'Impromptu de Versailles*, and by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*. What a pity that both of them were not professors at the Conservatory! They would have overturned the old method of teaching. My Arnolphe then was Shakespearean. But I retained the Gallic flavor of Molière. I was terrific when I tore my hair out before Agnès, but I provoked a laugh. And great Molière took such a strong hold on me that I became, for a time, unjust to Shakespeare. I saw nothing but Molière. I was blindly devoted to Poquelin. I said to two young actresses, whom I saw the puppies around me paying court to:

“Have but one love, my children. Love Molière! He does not deceive!”

At all events, I owed it to him that I was engaged by Monsieur Duncan, and that I had an opportunity to make my first tour, — a pleasure that I had been

unable to enjoy when Rachel refused to take me in her troupe.

Tours ! Yes, *parbleu*, I have made tours, like everybody else. The tour, why, the tour is the proof of popularity. When your country has conferred glory upon you, you ask for your *excuse* and go abroad to receive the plebiscite of foreign lands. You think, perhaps, that the foreigner does n't know anything ? He is often shrewder than we, and I have had successes in South America — I will go no farther — that the dandies of the boulevard could not understand. No. I have stirred the Latin soul of Mexico and the Saxon soul of New York. Indeed those were my best days.

How many times I said to myself : —

“To think that in France I have not always been understood !”

Why, I have been hissed at Mont de Marsan in *Marino Faliero*. And that same *Marino Faliero* was one of my triumphs in Valparaiso. I was recalled eighteen times during the evening. Eighteen times. And the audience went fairly wild in the *fifth*, when I cried, after reading my sentence by Leoni, the patrician, one of the Ten : —

“Bords sacrés, ciel natal, palais que j'élevai,
Flots rougis de mon sang, où mon bras a sauvé
Ces fiers patriciens qui, sans moi, dans les chaînes,
Ramèraient aujourd'hui sur les flottes de Gênes,
De ma voix qui s'éteint recueillez les accents !”

I must say that I had a way of my own of depicting the patricians rowing, like felons, on the Genoese galleys! I bent, I labored, I went through the motions,—my pantomime was equal to my diction. And one must use pantomime in foreign lands.

Ah! the good old days!

What a joy to travel! 'Tis so tempting to seek change of air, to shake off the heavy chain of one's habits and prejudices! If I were young I would board a steamer once more and recommence my tours.

And then, I am neither superstitious nor a fool, I beg you to believe, and yet I cannot fail to observe, to note a strange and significant fact, which applies to myself alone. Whenever I have gone to sea, either on my way to America or returning to France, every time, you understand, if there had been bad weather recently, a high sea or a storm the day before, the waves fell when I went on board the steamer. By chance, I admit, but a strange chance, you will agree. And the fact was so often noticed by others that passengers would ask at the offices of the *Compagnie Transatlantique* to be booked by the same ship with me; yes, I do not exaggerate, and on one occasion, as the French ambassador was engaging his passage on *La Champagne*, the clerk said to him: "Ah! your Excellency is in luck; you will have a fine passage,—Brichanteau will be on board!"

And then there is another advantage about these tours, you see. One forgets his gutter on Rue du Bac, one enlarges his horizon. You think with full lungs. It is the true life.

Travelling ! Why, it's travelling that teaches one to know men and things. It is that that shapes, and I may say, tempers an intellect. I have learned more in a two years' tour than in twenty years in Paris. I am not speaking of the scenery and properties, which are a little odd. They break tubes of red paint to imitate blood in duels, and I have seen in the *kermesse* in *Faust*, a bear take part, a genuine bear, a muzzled bear that would have given Monsieur Gounod nervous prostration. Nor do I refer to geography, which one can learn at home ; I refer to politics, philosophy, and, in a word, humanity.

For example, I was a staunch republican when I started. I am equally so now, but, *mon Dieu !* I have made comparisons. I don't feel the same detestation of kings, now that I have seen them close at hand. There are some of them who are very good men. No, I am not exaggerating. I have met more than one. I have had an opportunity to judge of their erudition, and I have been surprised more than once. In general they are well acquainted with our literature. You feel that they are well educated. Several indeed consulted me as to works of their own. I gave them my opinion with the frankness of

Alceste speaking to Oronte. Oh ! I am no courtier, or, if I am, I am a courtier of Art.

In Ruthenia, for instance, to go no farther, in Ruthenia, the king who had had an opportunity to hear me and estimate my powers in the repertory — I was then in my second stage, the Molieresque stage — the king was kind enough to invite me to breakfast. He wanted to see me at close quarters. I was not sorry to study him in my turn. I accepted the invitation.

I must say that he received me with extraordinary affability. If I had not passed through so many salons, under the guidance of a chamberlain, after entering a palace guarded by sentinels, I could not have believed that I was in the abode of a sovereign and before a king. We had a delightful breakfast, at which we talked of everything, — Paris, the stage, our painters and our poets. I should have liked to turn the conversation upon political subjects, being desirous to know a king's opinion upon all the dark European problems ; but at every allusion that I made my host changed the subject, and I fancied that I disturbed him, annoyed him. He plainly eluded me ; he eluded me, affecting to speak of literary subjects only.

So literature it had to be ! At one point the king said to me : —

“ Monsieur Brichanteau, I must ask your advice ! ”

I ventured one last hint : —

“Concerning the Russo-Turkish war?”

There was then a war between the Sublime Porte and Holy Russia.

“No; concerning a translation I have begun, — a translation of Shakespeare!”

I looked at him a moment before replying. He spoke of that Englishman to me, a Frenchman! To me who, after acting in so many melodramas here, there, and everywhere, had just plunged anew — having been engaged with that understanding — into French art *par excellence*, the classic comedy, the pure laughter of Molière! “Must I tell him my whole opinion?” I said to myself mentally. And mentally I answered: “Why not?” And I told him my opinion; I expressed it with a genuine republican frankness that might perhaps have offended our republicans.

“Sire,” I cried, “you are translating Shakespeare? you are doing wrong!”

“Oh! Monsieur Brichanteau, allow me —”

“Do you know what Shakespeare was? Do you know, Sire?”

“Why, I think I do, Monsieur Brichanteau!”

“*Mon Dieu!* Sire, having always been and being still a warm admirer of great Will, I will not go so far as to repeat Voltaire’s remark. No, Shakespeare was not a *drunken savage*, but let us admit, between ourselves, that he was a dreamy, flighty, capricious

genius. That is the word, capricious. He must have constant changes of scene, tableaux without end, ghosts, apparitions, a most extraordinary stage-setting; I know his repertory well, I have acted in it. Without costumes and without the footlights, what becomes of that art? Whereas Molière! Ah! Molière! Talk about Molière! Molière depicts all humanity, all, you understand, in a sick-room. He has no need of witches, ghosts, tempests; no, an old easy-chair, Argan sitting in it, men and women standing about, and the whole great tragedy of life is acted beneath his merriment. That is a discovery of my own. One needs no doublets or swords to interpret the divine Molière. A smock-frock and a striped cap, and that's all. At this moment, Sire, I would give all Shakespeare's dramas, you understand, all — and God knows they are sublime! yes, sublime! — I would give them all in a lump for Gros-Réné's tirade or Harpagon's monologue! Those are my sentiments: *Molierism!*"

The king had listened to me, deep in thought. He was, like myself, shaken in his worship of Shakespeare, I saw that clearly. And it was vain for him to venture a remonstrance: —

"But *Don Juan*, Monsieur Brichanteau?"

"What *Don Juan*?"

"Molière's *Don Juan*. There are many ghosts in *Don Juan*. The statue of the Commander!"

“ True, Sire ; but when he wrote *Don Juan*, Molière was no longer a French genius, he became almost a Castilian genius, like Hugo. And his marble Commander is of pasteboard ! That is not what makes him great. In the scene of the pauper, for instance ; if I were not in your Majesty’s presence I should say that the scene of the pauper is downright socialism. And socialism, Sire — ”

But I felt that I was going too far and I stopped.

That time the king did not reply. He sat for a moment in meditation. I see him now and I shall always see him, manuscript in hand, the manuscript of his translation of Shakespeare. He had opened the sheets ; he rolled them up again, and what do you suppose he said to me, — yes, he, the king, the King of Ruthenia, — the king to whom I had almost spoken in the tone of Saint-Vallier addressing the king at Marignan ?

He said to me : —

“ You are right, Monsieur Brichanteau. I abandon to-day the translation of Shakespeare, and to-morrow, to-morrow, Monsieur Brichanteau, I begin the translation of Molière ! ”

That incident gave me some new ideas concerning kings, and, between ourselves, you cannot imagine a Republican Minister of Public Instruction, after consulting me during an audience concerning one of his literary projects, saying to me : “ Monsieur Brichan-

teau, I abandon this scheme of mine, and I shall follow your advice!" No, I deplore it for our country's sake; but what a king of so venerable and noble a family as Braganza did, — listen to me, — a tribune in our country would probably refuse to do! — and I should not believe it possible, you see, no, I should not believe it, if I had not travelled!

Unluckily for me, as I was engaged to play the repertory, the repertory made no money, and I found myself compelled to appear once more in the dramas of my youth, without the proper costumes. Those were melancholy experiences! I have played Triboulet in the cloak of Mascarille. But what did it matter? The South Americans asked nothing better, and besides, the soul was still there; the soul transformed everything! The soul laughed at costumes! I might have played Triboulet in a black coat and I should still have been the Triboulet of the poet to the entrails, to the very marrow.

So I was ripe for America, and I went there, — the first time, as I have told you, with the American Duncan — a great success; the last time with Marchandier. As ill-luck would have it, during that last tour — I have always been unlucky — in the midst of my triumphs across the Atlantic, the yellow fever attacked me. Yes, in a terrible form. And right in the theatre. On the stage. An almost fatal attack of the *black vomit*. It was at Havana. I fell like a

log to the floor, the audience took fright, the house was quickly emptied. I did not die, but the Marchandier company, to which I belonged, being obliged to continue its tour, Marchandier left me at the hotel, with my bill all settled, my salary paid, and the price of my passage home agreed upon with the captain of a vessel about to sail for France.

Ah! the destruction of all my dreams! I was already beginning to say to myself: "I please the Americans. Clearly I have made a favorable impression. This year my earnings will not be heavy, because, after being exploited by Duncan, I am placed in a subordinate position by Marchandier; but I am sowing the seed! I am sowing for the future! In two or three years I shall return here on my own account, I shall return well-known, classified, endorsed. I shall have my own troupe. The advertisements will read: *The Brichanteau Troupe — Sébastien Brichanteau of all the theatres of Paris and the departments.* And I shall make my fortune!"

And there I was. The yellow fever cut away all my hopes from under my feet. In a day, in an hour, it changed the triumphant artist to a valetudinarian. My colleagues continued the tour, the hunt for dollars — I should say that Marchandier failed before the tour ended. And I was left behind in a room at a hotel, like a package left at the railway station. To-day these memories of travel seem charming to me.

It is the effect of perspective. But at the time I was not in high spirits. *Peste!* no! *Peste!* that was the whole trouble.¹ I was in despair, I was wild.

What could I do? Overtake the troupe? Marchandier had gone, the devil knows where. Act on my own account? But how? I was all alone. Recite monologues, then, or humorous pieces? Sing *chansonnettes*, as Duncan wanted me to do? Could I so debase myself, I, Brichanteau, who had left Hugo only to go to Molière, and abandoned Molière only to return to Hugo—could I stoop to farce at *café-concerts*? Never! You understand, never!

No, as fate had pronounced against me, I would sail for home. I would return to France; I would await a better opportunity to resume my travels, to talk literature and æsthetics with kings, and to carry off the dollars of the Americans. The opportunity would surely come, *parbleu!*

Opportunity? *Ventre-Saint-Gris*, as I used to say in *Le Béarnais*, it is a true saying that opportunity is bald! It no longer offered me a single one of its hairs. Not one. Completely bald, my poor Brichanteau! That infernal *black vomit* had shattered me, sapped my strength, and I returned to my country, like a sheep to the fold, to recover my health.

¹ *Peste!* a common exclamation,—the original meaning being a plague or pest.

I needed to do it, and then, and then — the truth must be told — I was growing old. Even the oak grows old. I felt, or thought I felt, that I was still as strong, as ardent, as vigorous as ever, measuring my muscles by my soul. But the mirror told me the truth when I consulted it, seeking and finding in my hair, once as thick and dense as the grass in the field, bald spaces made by thought, the ebullition of the brain, or by advancing years. I had wrinkles. Yes, I admit it, I had wrinkles. My teeth lost their accustomed enamel, and the teeth are the diamonds of virile artists.

Thereupon I said to myself, shaking my head : —

“ Brichanteau, my boy, the autumn is coming, the leaves are falling ; you must be thinking about changing your line, Brichanteau ! ”

Change my line ? Ah, yes ! Change to the noble fathers. Become the bass after being the tenor ! Become Ruy Gomez after being Hernani ! There is no use rebelling or sulking against nature. So the world goes.

“ Very well,” I answered myself, “ it’s agreed, Brichanteau, you will change your line ! ”

But in order to change one’s line, one must have a line, even if one has them all, and, in order to play Ruy Gomez or the other graybeards, one must have a stage to play them on. And there I was. I had no stage. I had nothing. I was a wanderer, an outcast,

a back number, an old-fashioned boulevard actor. I was in another boat, as they say, and my own boat was a dilapidated, decayed craft that took in water at every seam. I was of another epoch, — a mummy; a cross between a romanticist and classicist, not realistic or Ibsenian for a sou, *rococo*, an old clock, as used up as Malek-Adel! The operetta had swept over my art, scoffed at my idols, demolished my gods. How play *Marino Faliero* after *Le Pont des Soupirs*? *Le Pont des Soupirs* is more amusing! Nothing could be more amusing. Monsieur Ludovic Halévy is so witty! "Release the doges!" Alas! the doges were more than released, they were strangled, cast into the Orfano Canal, done, done, done!

And with them my repertory, *Don Sébastien de Portugal*, *Guillaume Collman*, *Perrinet Leclerc*, all, all! I could hardly play my old trash in the suburbs on Sundays! I have consented to play general utility parts at Montparnasse. I have appeared at the Bouffes du Nord. I, who once gave advice to sovereigns, have descended one by one the rungs of a ladder held by bad luck. And the years passed, the hard, melancholy years, the years when the rheumatism sprouts and the teeth fall out, but hunger grows no less.

I mean the hunger for the ideal as well, the appetite for applause, for triumph! I reminded myself of a waif among the novices, those who think they know

everything when they leave the Conservatory, the actor-bankers who play little Spanish farces in private houses, the comic actors who entertain wedding parties, the realists who deem themselves artists because they act with their every-day gestures, — you should ennoble, dress up your gestures, messeigneurs ! — or those who say : “ Art ? Where does it live ? The café-concert is the road to success ! ” and who go to the café-concert. And I cannot say that I suffered from all that. No, I stood erect in my pride.

“ Brichanteau, you are not like other men ! You have faith, Brichanteau ! You have never paltered ! You are steadfast ! Even when you play subordinate parts, you play them in genuine theatres and in works of art. You will die with the drama, Brichanteau ! Brichanteau, proud in defeat, you have — and that is something, you know — you have, and you will keep immaculate, your own esteem ! ”

But one's own esteem does not prevent one's growing old.

Thereupon, feeling that I was losing my footing and that the years were accumulating, and as I had not even taken the precaution, in my dislike for all sorts of syndicates and my exclusive humor, to become a member of the Society of Dramatic Artists — I should have a pension to-day, fool that I am ! — I was anxious about my old age, and being unable to

obtain justice from managers who do not know me and keep me waiting in their antechambers, I accepted the place that was mentioned to me one day by a fanatical bicyclist who lived on the same landing with me.

A place? What place? I dare not tell you. Must I confess it, monsieur? I am a *starter* in bicycle races. I am the man who gives the signal for starting; sometimes by firing a pistol—*bang!*—at other times by shouting: “Go!” in that grand voice that Monsieur Beauvallet envied and that has not lost its magnificence. “Go!” You hear that note. “Go!” Yes, the voice still has its trumpet tone.

And think of this: I, the slave of the idea, assist in the degradation of art by means of the bicycle. For the bicycle means death to the stage. A man returns from riding, thoroughly exhausted. Is he going to dress to go and listen to Corneille? People pass their days on the iron machine and have no time to read. Or else they read tourists' newspapers. Equality of the sexes. Men and women ride together. To be sure, it makes muscles. But, *vive Dieu!* we too have muscles, and, what is more, brains, enthusiasm, ideas!

And shall I tell you something more? Music also, combined with cycling, will destroy literature. One feels in music, one does not think. Richard Wagner, — a colossus by the way; the bells in *Parsifal* have

made me weep like many another — Wagner has dethroned Hugo ; Wagner is the vague and nebulous Shakespeare of the *snobs* who have not read Shakespeare, and who think that everything dates from the giant of Bayreuth. That German has conquered Gaul by the slow but sure process of infiltration. No more French music, but Wagnerian music. No more cafés where people meet and chat, no more beer-shops where we can smoke at our ease. Green liqueurs and Germanism. Adieu to the vintage and the blood of France ! I repeat myself, I know, and I do not pride myself on being a connoisseur in music, but I place literature above everything, and the stage, the king of all forms of literature, is action, is life. To the Scandinavian mythology, the Brocken and the Venusberg, I prefer the pure wine of old Pierre of Rouen, the Gascon vintage of Dumas Père, or Balzac's Touranian hogshead. Shall I tell you ? The very thing that seems to me to prove the inferiority of Germany is its superiority in music. Monsieur Hugo, yes, Victor Hugo said that to us one day, when we handed him a subscription list for a cannon to be presented to the artillery of the National Guard. When I thought it over, that seemed to me not so bad !

And I take part in these festivities of the decadence. Concerts and velodromes. What do I say ? — that I take part in these degrading functions ? I

do worse than that : as I have told you, I manage them. A *starter*, I ! Starter of velodromes. That is what I have come to. Sometimes I close my eyes when I say, "Go !" and it seems to me that I am giving the signal, not for a race but for a duel, an epic duel, as in *Le Bossu* or *La Dame de Monsoreau*. "Go !" And I listen for the thrilling clash of swords and the resounding roar of applause. Or again, when the signal is a pistol shot, I fancy that I am Andrès once more and am acting in the *Pirates de la Savane* or in *Le Gaucho*, as at Perpignan ! I breathe again the powder of the old days. Of the old days !

In the old days I held the record, as they say, for hopes. In my dreams I was, at one and the same time, Bocage, Ligier, Talma, — Talma II., as Monsieur Ingres used to say ! I was everything. I slept upon mattresses of laurel-leaves, like the generals who sleep on the flags they have conquered. I was renowned, I was beloved ! If the magistrates of the cities in which I acted had brought me the keys upon a velvet cushion it would have seemed no more than natural to me. *In the old days !* It is amazing how many illusions a word, a single word can destroy !

Life has made very merry with me, and I sometimes ask myself, I, an old strolling player turned starter for the benefit of *cyclewomen*, if I am not a

helpless, empty failure. But no, I feel within me all the fire of youth. I have the same faith, the same ardor, the same talent as *in the old days*. Is it my fault if no use is made of me? Is it my fault? On that theory Belisarius was a failure because he held out his cap, and Lamartine because he was poor. And then, who is not a failure, in this age of lofty ambitions? Our poor France herself missed fire when she wrestled chivalrously with the German engineers!

I often think of that. I live over the past. I regret nothing; I am making an inglorious end, but I have lived well. No concession. I may be a starter as I am, — it is as good a trade as some others, — but I would not consent for an empire to appear at a café-concert. Ah! pardon me, I have done it. Yes, in Faubourg Saint-Martin. But I recited nothing there but Saint-Vallier's tirade and some lines of Corneille. Indeed they hissed me there, or rather they hissed Corneille, not me. They found it tiresome. "Give us a *chansonnette*!" they cried. Ask me for a *chansonnette*! me, as the Yankee *impresario* once did! I resigned! And the night I resigned I had no idea where I should sleep the next night.

But one does not palter with art; one may be a starter, a laboring man, whatever one chooses and whatever one can, but not a side-show for low-class clowns! Ah! not that! No, no, no!

And then, when I think of it, what does glory depend upon? Upon trifles, monsieur, — chance first, and hazard next. Stay, listen to this tale, — it is cruel, but amusing. I knew a man, a fellow-actor, who had the most beautiful voice in the world, such a voice for opera as mine for the drama, — a voice, you understand, to surpass all other singers, even the best endowed and the most famous, and to eclipse the memory of the Duprez and Rogers and Capouls. A Toulousan, my friend, — from the neighborhood of Toulouse, like Montescure, — and a tenor. A fine fellow. And what is more, by no means ugly. A little thick-set, a little short and with a large neck, but in the matter of physical qualities people make allowances for singers which they deny to us who interpret the poets. An ugly man may sing *Le Cid* if he has a fine voice, but you could never act it if nature had not endowed you with a physique fitted to the character. Thence, in my opinion and even though I were a goldsmith, like Monsieur Josse, the superiority of the tragedian to the singer. Let us go on. That is a question of æsthetics.

My friend Cadenet, then, had all the good qualities. An incomparable voice! He could put any one, I tell you, no matter who, in his pocket. Knowing nothing of music, by the way, singing by instinct like the cricket, but necessarily better than the cricket.

We used to say to him : —

“Cadenet, you have eight hundred thousand francs in your windpipe ; learn to sing !”

“But how am I to learn ?”

“Find a teacher. But don't trust him. If he is jealous of your voice, you are lost !”

And I remembered my professor at the Conservatory, those terrible lessons, in which I could feel my master's rivalry stealthily at work. Enough of myself from this time on ! And then I am telling Cadenet's story, not my own.

Poor Cadenet, who was clerk to a dry-goods dealer on Rue du Mail, went to Monsieur Roger, who listened to him, and lo ! when he heard that admirable voice, pure as rock crystal, Monsieur Roger exclaimed : —

“As I cannot act any more, I want to provide my own successor on the stage ! Will you take lessons of me ?”

Would he ! He was too happy, was Cadenet ! Study with Monsieur Roger ! The great artist ! The creator of the *Prophète* ! Cadenet had not a sou, but Monsieur Roger asked nothing for his lessons. The pleasure of bringing forth a singer, the joy of teaching him. Glory !

Behold Cadenet, therefore, practising scales with Monsieur Roger. He learned to sing ; but the poor fellow had one cursed defect, a vice, ah ! a fatal vice !

He had no memory at all ! Not the least trace of memory, I tell you. He sang, oh, yes ! but as for committing a rôle to memory, or even scenes or lines, impossible ! A strange thing, memory. I have studied, learned and digested something like eight hundred parts in my life, including *pannes*,¹ and I should only have to run them over once before going to bed, then sleep on them, and I could play them to-morrow morning. That is a gift. Memory is the actor's best friend.

Cadenet had none of it, and he recoiled from learning an opera like a cat from swallowing the sea.

"But Cadenet," Monsieur Roger would say to him, "you must learn a rôle finally, as you want to make your début."

"True, Monsieur Roger. All right, I will learn ! But *Dieu de Dieu*, how hard it is !"

"Oh, well !" rejoined the professor, "life is n't to be spent eating cake. We must work !"

"I will work, Monsieur Roger !"

Monsieur Roger did not ask him to learn many operas, however. Only two, — *Robert le Diable* and *Les Huguenots*. In truth, to learn Robert and Raoul, two fine rôles, was not so hard as to carry Malakoff. So poor Cadenet dug away at them, twisted and turned them in his head, chewed them over and over,

¹ Unimportant parts of only a few lines.

ruminated over them, took them to walk with him, and read himself to sleep with them.

"Well, Cadenet, is it all right?" Monsieur Roger asked.

"It's all right, Monsieur Roger, it's all right; I know three acts of *Robert* already!"

He took time for it, did Cadenet, but at last he succeeded in conquering his unruly memory and in learning those two operas; and Monsieur Roger was able to procure him an engagement at Havre.

From Havre to Rouen is not far; from Rouen to Paris is only a step. If Cadenet succeeded at Havre, he might very well, some fine day, take the train for Paris. His marvellous voice made it possible!

In a word, he started for Havre as for the port that opens into the vast sea, immortality. I was on a tour through Casimir Delavigne's country, when I read in the *Journal du Havre* an announcement of Cadenet's forthcoming début. Dear Cadenet! I was playing *Ruy Blas* — not Ruy Blas exactly, but the alguazil, you know, who arrests Don César. One must live, and then the scene is of the utmost importance. There is true drama, a great situation. If the part is not in the hands of some one reliable, the act is endangered. I always, I am proud to say, rescued it from danger and strengthened it!

On the day before that of Cadenet's début, I went

to the Grand Théâtre, after the rehearsal, to see him. He was beaming. They had just finished *Les Huguenots* and the rehearsal had gone off admirably.

The manager was enchanted, the stage-manager was rubbing his hands ; they were going to have a fine début !

"If only my devilish memory does n't go back on me !" said Cadenet to me.

"You know your part ?"

"I know two of them, — all that Monsieur Roger required of me. Not one more. But I know two perfectly, — Robert and Raoul !"

"Very good ; if you appear only in *Robert le Diable* and *Les Huguenots*, those are enough. Afterward you will have plenty of time to learn other operas. The memory improves mechanically ; I'll tell you one method."

But he was not listening to me. He was mumbling confused words : "*The ramparts of Amboise. Yes, thou hast said it ; yes, thou hast said it, — thou dost love me !*" He was going over his rôle. He was right.

"You will be here to-morrow to support me ?" he said, going through the motion of the *claqueur* clapping his hands.

"Will I be here ! During the first two acts. After that I shall have to go and dress for my alguazil, and then I will return for the last act, for the recall : *Cadenet ! Cadenet !* You will hear me shout *Cadenet*,

I promise you, my boy ! You know my note ! The howitzer ! The thunder ! ”

He was delighted.

Throughout the following day he walked in front of the Grand Théâtre, proudly reading these words on the placard : *For the début of Monsieur Cadenet, first tenor, LES HUGUENOTS, book by Monsieur Scribe, music by Meyerbeer.* And he drew his short figure up to its full height in front of his printed name, as if his brow would reach the stars.

When evening came I was at the entrance to the orchestra chairs, near the door, in order to be able to leave more quickly, and I heard the *habitués* of the theatre, the subscribers, asking who this Cadenet was, whom the management introduced to the Havre public for the first time. They had arranged a little biography. Cadenet was a youth of good family, nephew of a high official, who had an irresistible vocation for the stage. It was said that Monsieur Ambroise Thomas, having heard him at a concert, had torn his hair in despair that so fine a subject had escaped the Conservatory. In short, the ground was well prepared. A good prospectus, cleverly done.

The curtain rose. I was as excited as if it had been a performance given by myself. We artists are made that way : either we hate each other mortally, and it is war to the knife between us, or we understand better than any one the anguish of our

comrades, and when their hearts are beating like an alarm-bell ours beats in unison. Their emotion is ours. Their *stage-fright*—that word so often heard in the wings—is our *stage-fright*.

To tell the truth, I was convinced that Cadenet was going to win the game hands down. A superb voice, young, not worn. A fine part, for one can never tell what a fine part will make of a man! He had only to show himself.

"I will *make his entrée* for him," I said to myself. "I will be his *benefactor*,"—the name given to the leader of the *claque*. "Let us prepare our clappers!"

The curtain rose. You know *Les Huguenots*. The stage represents a hall in the *château* of the Comte de Nevers, a Catholic nobleman,—also a fine part. In the background, windows, a garden, a lawn. Doors at right and left. Young noblemen playing at foot-ball, dice, and *bilboquet*. And Nevers sings:

"Des beaux jours de la jeunesse,
Dans la plus riante ivresse,
Hâtons-nous, le temps nous presse,
Hâtons-nous, hâtons-nous, hâtons-nous de jouir!"¹

Hâtons-nous three times over. They make haste by wasting time. Then the chorus takes it up.

¹ In the mad laughing passion
Of youth's fairest days,
Hasten we, for time presses,
Haste we, haste we, haste we to enjoy!

“Hâtons-nous, le temps nous presse,
Hâtons-nous, hâtons-nous, hâtons-nous de jouir!”

Three times more. In a drama that would be perfectly ridiculous. In an opera you repeat things three times. In Shakespeare too, by the way!

I spare you the chorus: —

“Aux jeux, à la folie
Consacrons notre vie,
Et qu’ici tout s’oublie,
Excepté le plaisir!”¹

You see, I know the piece. I know it. I have a memory. I should say, by way of explanation, that I have sung in the chorus at Lons-le-Saunier and Albi. My engagement forced me to it. Impossible to refuse. One has to undergo those humiliations.

Well, when the chorus is finished Raoul enters. Raoul de Nangis, a Protestant gentleman, makes his appearance after the concerted piece and the *allegretto moderato*. His coming is announced by the dialogue between Tavannes, a Catholic gentleman, and Nevers:

“De ces lieux enchanteurs, châtelain respectable,
Pourquoi donc, cher Nevers, ne pas nous mettre à
table?”²

And Nevers: —

¹ To mirth and to folly
Devote we our lives,
And let all be forgotten
Save pleasure alone!

² Dear Nevers, worthy châtelain of this enchanting spot,
I prithee why do we not dine?

" 'Nous attendons encore un convive ! ' "

' Et lequel ? ' "

' Un jeune gentilhomme, un nouveau camarade,
Qui, dans les lansquenets vient d'acquérir un grade
Par le crédit de l'Amiral ! ' "

' Oh ! ciel, c'est donc un huguenot ? ' " ¹

Amid their diversions the young nobles do not forget their hatred ! The Huguenot is the enemy ! De Retz cries : *I propose to amuse myself with him !* Nevers replies : *And I, to convert him !*

" Au culte des vrais dieux, l'amour et le plaisir ! " ²

Very frivolous those young Catholic nobles are. At that juncture Raoul makes his *entrée*. Accompanied *quasi-allegretto*. He appears, he comes forward, he looks at the young lords one after another, smiles and begins : —

" Sous ce beau ciel de la Touraine,
Parmi ce que la cour offre de plus brillant,
Pour moi, simple soldat que l'on connaît à peine,
Ah ! quel honneur d'être admis ! " ³

¹ We wait another guest !

And who ?

A young gentleman, a new companion,
Who has obtained a commission in the archers
Through the Admiral's influence !

Oh, heaven !

Can it be that he's a Huguenot ?

² To the worship of the true gods, love and pleasure !

³ Beneath this fair Touranian sky,
Amid all those who shine most brilliantly at court,
For me, a simple soldier who is hardly known,
How great an honor 't is to be received !

And Cossé, a Catholic gentleman, replies : *Sur mon honneur, tres bien !*¹ while Tavannes rejoins with scorn : —

“Oui, l'air gauche et gêné d'un noble de province !”²

Observe that I had, in a previous conversation, advised Cadenet to make the most of his *entrée*, — on the stage one must make the most of everything, — and to address his words less to the young Catholic noblemen than to the Havre audience, when he said, modestly, with his right hand on his doublet, heart side, like a *débutant* : —

“Pour moi, simple soldat, que l'on connaît à peine,

“Ah ! quel honneur d'être admis !”

“Look at the audience, look at the ladies,” I had said to him. “Appear smiling and deeply moved at the same time, anxious yet confident ; that will make a good impression !”

So Cadenet entered, among the young Catholic gentlemen. Not badly costumed. Rather too large a plume in his hat, and a sort of Tyrolean hunter's bearing, but with his legs tightly encased in his trousers and slashed boots. Really not bad. Quite picturesque. He came forward. He smiled. He bowed. He looked at Cossé, Nevers, De Retz,

¹ Well said, upon my honor !

² Ay, the awkward and embarrassed air of a provincial noble !

Tavannes, he looked at the audience, and suddenly he began in his beautiful voice : —

“Oui, voilà mes seuls amours,
Le vin, le jeu, les belles,
Voilà, voilà mes seuls amours !”¹

And he sang with such good heart, with such faith !

“Le vin, le jeu, les belles !”

Stupefaction. The poor devil was losing his mind. He forgot Raoul, he forgot *Les Huguenots*, he was singing *Robert le Diable*. Of the two he plunged into the one that came naturally to his memory, his poor, feeble, hesitating memory. There was such amazement on the stage and in the theatre that at first no one, yes, no one seemed to notice the appalling error. Even I myself was mute, turned to stone. Among the artists Berrouillet alone, who was playing Nevers, had the presence of mind to whisper to Cadenet : —

“Why, that’s *Robert* that you’re singing ! You are singing *Robert*. Raoul, not Robert, is what you are playing to-night ! Raoul ! Raoul ! Raoul !”

Cadenet did not hear, did not understand. He continued to sing : —

“Le vin, le jeu, les belles,
Voilà mes seuls amours !”

¹ Yes, these are my only loves,
Wine, play, and fair women,
These, these are my only loves !

But, after all, in a party of young Catholic noblemen, who had sung a moment before, —

“Hâtons-nous, le temps presse,
Hâtons-nous de jouir,”

praise of wine, gaming, and fair ones was quite in keeping! And the other singers and the orchestra had concluded to go on with *Les Huguenots*, thinking that the débutant would instantly discover his mistake. And Berrouillet, raising his voice, began to sing in the rôle of Nevers: —

“Que Bacchus me guide,
Que lui seul préside
A ce gai repas!”¹

when suddenly — ah! that was the climax! — poor Cadenet, exerting all the power of his lungs, replied angrily with an awe-inspiring: —

“C'en est trop! Qu'on arrête un vassal insolent!”²

He went on with *Robert*, he answered Nevers by ordering Raimbaud's arrest. The young Catholic nobles recoiled in terror or roared with laughter. The audience cried: —

“Yes! yes! it is too much!” (*c'en est trop!*)

¹ May Bacchus be my guide,
May none but he preside
At this joyous repast!

² 'T is too much! Arrest the insolent vassal!

"He is making sport of us ! Out with him ! Down with the débutant ! Give us our money ! "

And Cadenet, carried away by the inspiration of the moment, stalked up to Nevers and roared, still singing *Robert le Diable* : —

" Une heure je t'accorde !
Fais ta prière et puis — Qu'on le pende à l'instant ! " ¹

After that it was impossible to continue. A frightful tempest was let loose in the hall.

"Curtain ! curtain ! Call the troops ! Police ! "

Some armed themselves with small benches and threatened to throw them at Cadenet's head ; they were already pounding on the seats as if they would shatter them. The police were sent for ; some officers appeared. The voice of the stage-manager was heard, shouting : "Curtain ! "

And Cadenet saw the canvas descending between him and the exasperated audience, — an ominous though fragile barrier between himself and glory. They led him off the stage. He insisted upon continuing. His powerful voice could be heard, exclaiming : —

"I have begun my part and I mean to finish it ! "

"But we are playing *Les Huguenots*, and you are singing *Robert le Diable* ! "

¹ One hour I grant thee !
Say thy prayers, and then — Let him be hanged at once !

"That makes no difference ! I have begun, and I am going to finish !"

He had to be dragged into the wings. With torn doublet and battered hat, waving the plume which had fallen and which he had picked up, he struggled like a genuine Huguenot in the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew. Soon he began to tear his hair, to beat his breast, and to shrink back against the wall, poor fellow, in his desperation, realizing his misadventure at last — but too late !

In vain did the stage-manager beg the indulgence of the public and try to explain the *deplorable misunderstanding*; the public would accept no excuses.

"No more Cadenet ! No more Cadenet ! Put him out ! Give us back our money !"

The management offered to substitute for Cadenet, Fourgousse, also a Toulousan and very popular. And Fourgousse, who was found among the audience, soon appeared in Raoul's costume amid tempests of applause. This time Raoul said, as he should, to the Catholic nobles : —

"Sous ce beau ciel de Touraine,
Parmi ce que la cour offre de plus brillant—"

He made a tremendous success. And I returned with Cadenet to his room at Hôtel Frascati, while he shook his head and said again and again in a heart-broken tone : —

"What a memory ! What an atrocious memory !

No, I shall never have courage to go on the stage again! Never! Never!"

In the distance the sea roared, as agitated as the auditorium of the Grand Théâtre a few moments before.

If the *Transatlantique* had n't sailed, I would take my passage for America," said Cadenet between two tears; "I would accept any engagement, no matter where. Across the water I might make a mistake in my part without harm; they don't know French there."

"Don't you trust them!" I said. "They follow operas with the libretto. Indeed, they say that the libretto is what interests them most!"

Suddenly Cadenet wiped away his tears and raised his head.

"Brichanteau," he said, "are you very sure of this Fourgousse?"

"Why?"

"He came to listen to me at rehearsals, he watched me with a curl of the lip! Oh! such a curl! Is n't he capable of having organized a cabal against me?"

I looked at Cadenet without answering. A cabal! He thought it was a cabal now!

"But, my poor old fellow, as it was yourself who —"

"Yes, yes," said he. "Precisely. I was afraid I had fallen into a trap!"

If you should happen to meet Cadenet, he will tell you how the jealousy of Fourgousse of Toulouse prevented him from succeeding at Havre. And you will meet him. He's a policeman. He has become a guardian of the peace. It is his business now to put people out when the audience threatens to smash the benches. From time to time, when he is on duty at the Opéra, he sighs as he hears, through an open door, the applause bestowed on some tenor. He thinks that Fourgousse is a great villain; then, drawing himself up in his uniform, he consoles himself, so he has told me, with this reflection: —

"After all, I did better than that fellow! I gave an idea of two of Meyerbeer's operas at once, on the same evening, and if they had let me go on, I should have come out all right! Memory! What is memory? In art, *there is nothing else!*" He has heard me say that.

And he smites himself violently on the spot where his heart beats beneath the material of his policeman's tunic, — his heart, which, like mine, is an artistic heart.

Now, monsieur, what did Cadenet lack! Luck! It has failed me too. I am a starter, as he is a guardian of the peace. And I often say to him: —

"Who knows? Perhaps we were born to galvanize, you music, I the drama!"

Ah! the failures of life! But *basta!* It makes

payments on account to its creditors none the less, and I should be deuced happy, old and worn-out as I am, to begin once more to receive the dividends of the old days, — the petty joys, the cordial cheers, and the cherished loves!

I ask your pardon. I am late. And it is time for the rehearsal. Quarter-past two. The rehearsal? Ah! what irony! The rehearsal? We don't rehearse Hugo, nor even Bouchardy, but Sunday's race. To your post, starter! "To your post!" *Au revoir, monsieur!*

XI.

THE LAST MEETING.

SÉBASTIEN BRICHANTEAU seemed profoundly depressed when I met him for the last time.

He was walking along by the shops on Boulevard de Clichy, without looking at them, — a superb figure, despite his threadbare clothes, among the commonplace passers-by. His long hair, beneath his romantic broad-brimmed hat, seemed to me to have grown white. His tall, thin figure was still erect, but his shoulder-blades were outlined more sharply under the shiny cloth. In the beautiful sunlight of that spring day he was leaning on an umbrella, which he used as a cane, or rather, with such knightly grace he handled it, as a rapier or a long sword. He wore gloves that day, gloves that were too long for him, with gaping holes at the ends of the fingers, sooty black gloves of undressed kid; and his too full gray trousers described spiral or corkscrew curves around his calves.

And with it all there was a look of weary melancholy in his dull eyes, and the white snow of years had fallen on his mustache, still turned up at the

ends. He moved his fine soldierly head from time to time, and his lips, curling slightly, mumbled inaudible words, *between flesh and skin*, as they say.

It was in front of the little Théâtre des Batignolles, where the title of a farce then in vogue was displayed upon new posters; and when Brichanteau brushed against the steps and looked up at the names of the actors in large letters, I noticed that the shaking of his head became more accentuated, saddened, while his words came louder, like a protest in an undertone which asked nothing better than to become thunderous.

"Ah! Monsieur Brichanteau," I said to him, "I am very happy to meet you! You know that I admire in you the excellent man that you will always be, and the conscientious artist that you still are. What has happened to you? You seem depressed!"

"Ah! monsieur, if I am depressed, I have good reason to be! The statue! You remember, Montescure's statue, that I hoped to dedicate last autumn at Garigat-sur-Garonne? Well, the statue is at a standstill! Hove to! And no dedication possible as yet! And my famous gala performance, the performance I spoke to you about, was a dead failure! Have you a moment? I will tell you about it as we walk, or on a bench in Parc Monceau."

And amid the din of omnibuses and cabs, varied by the bell of the trams and the signals of bicyclists,

dilating upon his eternal dreams in the deafening, aggressive uproar, in the stifling dust of the multitude, a walking image of the hunter of chimeras, Sébastien Brichanteau told me the story of his last failure, dwelling sadly upon the post-scriptum of fame, the last note of hand drawn by him upon destiny and returned to him by destiny, not accepted.

"Ah!" he said, "I have had enough of the stage! It is decidedly better to be a starter. I have just made my last trial: I organized a benefit performance, and after superhuman efforts, the rock of ill-fortune fell upon my shoulders, like Sisyphus's rock, and it is a miracle that my loins were not crushed!

"For whose benefit was this performance? Ah! monsieur, you would guess, if I had not told you! I say again, I was determined to keep my oath, — the oath taken at the Salon in front of Montesquieu's statue, No. 3773, you know. I have moved heaven and earth for the *Roman Passing under the Yoke*, and I have been the more active, zealous, full of fire, because, to the sentiment of justice and reparation due the consumptive sculptor by which I was influenced, was added — I tell you this in confidence — another motive, more private, more sorrowful perhaps: the desire to assist a woman whom I have loved dearly, oh! very dearly. I have had many an adventure with women! — I do not refer to my rôles. In forty-five years of acting I have seduced some six hundred

young girls on the stage, rescued seven or eight hundred persecuted orphans, married thousands of *jeunes premières*, and even ravished persons of quality. But all that was between the footlights and the back curtain, and only counts for the brain. I am speaking of real life.

“You will do me this justice, monsieur, that in these sincere, and as they say to-day, ingenuous confessions, I have violated no amorous confidences. Pure discretion. I might fill volumes with tales of intrigues often paid for with tears. I have been neither a Lovelace — I have played the part at Béziers, by the way — nor a Casanova. But I have had my passions. I have discreetly dissected some of them for you. I have kept silence upon others.

“To think that I have been poisoned by a woman ! Yes, I, Brichanteau, inoculated as in the *Dolorida* of the poet. Madame Patricio, my manager — I have always been on the best of terms, as you have noticed perhaps, with my managers ; it was a sort of fatality, or rather it was a vocation, it was a gift — Madame Patricio, feeling that she was dying, — she was consumptive like the *Dame aux Camélias*, poor woman, and with it all, a little off her balance, a little mad, hysterical, so Monsieur Charcot said, — Madame Patricio summoned me one evening to her death-bed and said to me : —

““Forgive me, my beloved ! I adored you, I am

jealous, and as I do not choose that you shall love another after loving me, — forgive me, I beg you ! — I have poisoned you !’

“ ‘Poisoned me ?’

“ ‘Yes, I poured part of the laudanum that was ordered for me into your grog just now ! And you drank it !’

“ I had drunk, it was true, as in *Lucrece Borgia*.

“ Great God ! You can imagine the shock. Poisoned ! Poisoned for love ! It was something to boast of, it was romantic ; but it was a deuced bore, there is no other word for it, it was a bore. I did not reproach Suzanne — Madame Patricio’s name was Suzanne — too harshly, but I hurried off to the druggist’s. On the way it seemed to me that I could see the *flames in the darkness* of which Victor Hugo speaks in *Hernani*, and I even made a note of my sensations in order to act the scene in the *fifth* with more force, if occasion offered. A vulgar emetic concluded the adventure, and Madame Patricio died, having failed to drag me with her to the grave.

“ I swore on the impulse of the moment that I would remain faithful to her, although I was rather disgusted with her for her selfish passion. But now that the emetic had done its work, I retained only a grandiose and almost affectionate memory, yes, an affectionate, grateful, and flattered memory of that novel and original situation. You, see, monsieur, I

am entitled to say that I have been loved ! I have come near to being killed ! I have been poisoned by a woman !

“ And when I had to attend the poor creature to her last abiding-place, I was within an ace of having printed in gold letters on the ribbons of the funeral wreath : *To my dear manager from her grateful victim !* I abandoned the idea, for it would not have been understood.

“ And Virginie Gérard, the one for whom I organized the benefit, in part, she also was my manager, she also loved me, poor woman — without laudanum, I must do her that justice ; and now the unfortunate creature, after playing Déjazet in the provinces, is playing Ophelia naturally at Villejuif Asylum. I have just come from the asylum, and that is why you do not find me very cheerful.

“ Just imagine that I had been told that an old comrade of mine, Canterive, was an inmate there, properly taken care of, but lonesome and grieving, no doubt ; and remembering bygone years, I had asked permission to go and see him, to grasp his hand and carry him some tobacco. Another *no-luck* man, Canterive ! He used to play *La Citerne d'Albi* in swaggering fashion. He was better than many others. And now at Villejuif, poor fellow ! *Alas, poor Yorick !*

“ So I started for Villejuif, and I shall never forget

that visit. Ah ! if I had to act *Hamlet*, to depict a madman, I would have taken notes from life — how do you say? *in anima vili* — that day !

“As I waited for the tram on Place du Châtelet, near the two theatres where I have sometimes acted in subordinate parts, under a pseudonym, — I have even taken part in a Japanese *samourai* in an *International Morning* at the Théâtre Lyrique, then the Théâtre des Nations, — I said to myself that life is full of irony. I had seen Canterive on the municipal stage of the Châtelet, and I was going to visit him at a departmental asylum, — his Hôtel des Invalides !

“And from the roof of the tram I contemplated those broad arteries that have long since served to relieve the congestion of the populous quarters of the old days, of my youth : the Avenue des Gobelins, La Bièvre, that natural Venice, the Théâtre des Gobelins, where I saw Bocage in his old age, the Avenue d'Italie, the Bréa Chapel and the naked fortifications, the huge buildings of Bicêtre, where so many poor old men drag out their last days, Villejuif, where I mounted guard in 1870, and the plateau, swept by the winds of winter, from which we watched Chevilly and L'Hay in the distance, swarming with Prussians !

“And then, at the end of a long road, a great new building, with red roofs, surrounded by an iron fence and with arcades like some Italian convents, having the aspect of a town hall rather than a retreat for

lunatics. It was the Asylum. I asked for the doctor, a very pleasant man, who invited me into his office and bade a keeper go and fetch Canterive. I had not long to wait. Canterive must have been wandering about in the vicinity. He came in, fat as a monk, dressed in the regular costume of the asylum, brown jacket and trousers, and holding his cap in his hand.

“‘Canterive,’ said the excellent doctor, ‘here’s a friend of yours who wants to see you!’

“The poor devil turned his eyes upon me, great round eyes, with a very vague expression, hesitated a moment before recognizing me, then, stammering, stuttering, as if his tongue were almost paralyzed, he said:—

“‘Bri—Bri—ch—chan—Brich—Brichanteau!’

“He held out a trembling hand. It would be more accurate to say that I grasped his hand. Paralysis had already laid hold of him, and I gazed sadly at the ruin. Such a handsome fellow!—strong as an ox!—who had fought the bull at Nîmes, and *taken a fall* with professional wrestlers in the arenas of the Midi, to amuse himself. Bloated now and palsied and worn-out; but very happy.

“‘Do you need anything, Canterive?’

“‘No-nothing—I am ve-very comfortable here—very com-fort-able. Good f-f-food!—Ve-ve-very—And at reg-reg-reg—’

"At regular hours! Yes, and when he had nearly starved so many times!

"'And where do you think you are?' the doctor interrupted him. 'Do you know, Canterive, that you are in a mad-house?'

"My old comrade shrugged his shoulders, assumed an expression of crushing scorn, like a man turning up his nose at a wretched joke, and exclaimed: —

"'No — no-no. B-b-best hotel in Pa-a-aris. Good, very g-g-good hotel. Very — ve-ry. Many, ma-a-a-any g-g-guests!'

"Then he relapsed into a sort of unctuous beatitude. I talked to him, I questioned him. He did not answer. His happy smile was permanent. With his saucer-like eyes he welcomed vague visions. The poor fellow, who had been knocked about as few others have been, in rags and poverty, had fallen at last upon perfect happiness and tranquillity — where? In a lunatic asylum.

"'Oh! you need not disturb yourself about him,' said the doctor. 'He will end his days in peace and more happily than we.'

"I must say that Canterive manifested little grief when I took leave of him. Indeed he seemed to be in haste to go and sit, all by himself, on a bench in the sunlight. I took his hand once more and said '*Au revoir*;' he stammered an '*A-a-dieu*!' and left the room.

“ ‘And that, it may be, is happiness !’ I thought.

“The doctor was kind enough to ask me to inspect the establishment, and I felt the impression grow stronger within me that madmen are more interesting than fools, and not much more insane than men of intellect. I saw them there in all forms, and, as we were going out, I was struck by the pensive features of a young man with a military head, who was walking along the gallery with his head bent over an octavo volume.

“We spoke to him.

“He was reading, he said, what was to him a most interesting, fascinating book, — a *New Theory of the perpendicular system of triple isotherms and its application to curvilinear co-ordinates*.

“I made him repeat the title, which I engraved upon my memory — it is still superb — and I glanced at the doctor, saying in an undertone, ‘The perpendicular system of triple isotherms, poor fool !’

“But the doctor corrected my error.

“ ‘No, no. The book is a real one ; the book exists, and is a fine book. The author is a Vicomte de Salvert, doctor of science and professor in the Free Faculty of Sciences at Lille. You will find it at Gauthier-Villars !’

“Curvilinear co-ordinates ! The perpendicular system ! I was losing my balance. And I made haste to turn my back on a place where mathematicians

seemed insane, and where madmen like Canterive seemed so perfectly happy. I took leave of the doctor and set out to return to my tramway.

"Suddenly, as I drew near the gateway, I saw alighting from a cab, assisted by two attendants, one male and the other female, a little old, old woman, all wrinkled and broken, nodding her head and looking about her with the interest of an astonished girl; and, despite her age, despite the wrinkles and gray hair, and the idiotic smile on that poor shrunken face, I uttered an exclamation, recognizing instantly a flower of my past, and I said in a tone that came from my heart: —

" ' Virginie ! ' "

" She turned toward me.

" Virginie ! The Déjazet of Saint-Étienne, Lyon, Dijon, Strasbourg, the rival of Scriwaneck, the pretty girl, graceful as a Saxony statuette, who played Richelieu, Gentil-Bernard and Létorières as well, yes, really almost as well as the Parisian Déjazet herself ! Virginie Gérard, my manager in the old days, — so refined, so devoted, so gay, so wild, so kind-hearted, such a genuine grisette ! Virginie in that place ! Virginie, alighting from a cab to enter a lunatic asylum, the peaceful *good hotel*, where famished Canterive at least found bread for his old age !

" That gave me a shock, a violent shock to my whole system. The thing that made an even deeper

impression upon me was that Virginie, unlike Canterive, did not recognize me. No, not in the least. Her name, pronounced by a voice that has not yet lost its music, had made her turn her head mechanically in my direction. But there was no meaning in the look. No trace of life. The eyes did not see, no mark was made upon the brain. The laughter, revealing decayed yellow teeth — oh! the little rice grains of pretty white teeth she used to have! — the laughter was mute; and bright and mischievous as it had once been, it was now idiotic.

“I tried to say: —

“‘It is I — I, Brichanteau — Sébastien. At Lyon, you know — Lyon — the *Célestins*.’

“She did not listen to me, she did not hear me, and she sang, a sexagenarian Ophelia, in a thin, worn voice, snatches of the refrains of days gone by: —

“‘Combien je regrette
Mon bras si dodu,
Ma jambe bien faite
Et le temps perdu!’

“*La Douairière de Brionne!* Yes, her great success at the *Célestins* at Lyon! I was playing *Lazare le Pâtre* at the Grand Théâtre, of which Monsieur Gérard, her husband, also had control; and we resorted to amusing ruses — she, Comedy, I, Melodrama — to arrange meetings which our mutual passion rendered more ardent, perhaps, but assuredly less guilty!

“ Moreover, that husband of hers, a violent, drunken brute and gambler, deserved a fate a hundred-fold worse than was in store for him ! By his crazy speculations he ruined poor Virginie — she loved that ill-fated name, which Déjazet also bore. It was Gérard who hurled his devoted companion — devoted in a commercial sense — into destitution, and forced her down the first rung of the ladder that leads to madness. Peace to his ashes ! He killed himself or was killed at Montevideo, in a gambling hell ! It was an end worthy of his life.

“ Ah ! Virginie ! What memories her face evoked ! She was so pretty, was Virginie ! And so amusing ! Dark, vivacious as a bird, bright as a Parisian, and passionate as an Andalusian. My dear manager ! She generously added a perquisite of inestimable value to my salary, — love ! I ought to say that all that I earned went to her in the way of bouquets, bracelets, souvenirs. I would have liked to be Monte-Cristo, in order to subsidize both her theatres at once and cover her with gold. But she despised the clink of coin as I did myself ! She would gladly have left that fool of a Gérard, to live with me in a sixth-floor room, drinking cider and nibbling chestnuts ! Mimi Pinson ! I called her Mimi Pinson.

“ ‘ What would you have ? I am playing Frétillon,’ she said to me. ‘ I must wear petticoats suited to the character !’

“Moreover, at that moment the Célestins and the Grand Théâtre were both making a pile of money as big as themselves and, except for her husband, Mimi Pinson would have made her fortune. What extraordinary *situations* occur in real life! I had known her so charming, and I found her such a wreck! Old and shrunken, — a shrunken old woman! An old woman without memory, without expression, almost without life! An old, worn-out woman who sang in a faltering way a couplet that had remained in a fold of her brain, like a rag forgotten in the corner of an empty room: —

“ ‘Combien je regrette
Mon bras si dodu,—’

“I listened, — I had a feeling of tightness in my throat and my chest, like symptoms of angina pectoris.

“My poor Virginie! My little Virginie! Frétil-lon! My whole past! Those dingy white hairs — I remembered how it amused her in the old days when I brushed them flat with the hot iron as I was putting on her curl-papers! So dark and fine and soft Virginie’s hair used to be! I ought to have kept a few locks of it in an envelope, in my drawer. And now — ah! now! — Behold your youth, poor man! Brichanteau, behold your love!

“I shuddered; but I shook off my emotion, and I followed Virginie Gérard as far as the door of the

chief physician of the female quarter, who was waiting to question her and study her.

"But they stopped me on the threshold.

" 'You can't go in,' they said. 'This is a patient sent to us from Saint-Anne's, and she is to be isolated.'

"Very good, I would come again. Yes, certainly, I would come again; I would make inquiries, I would not forget Virginie, I would see her again. They would certainly let me see her.

"Thereupon I made inquiries as to what had happened to her. She had fallen, step by step, into most horrible destitution. Formerly she had really performed prodigies of valor in order to support the various managerial undertakings, the insane enterprises of her husband. She had played Déjazet's rôles on the prairies, singing and dancing for cowboys, who applauded by firing revolvers. She herself, with a revolver in her belt, — yes, the dainty grisette with tiny hands, — sometimes slept in the open air, and picked up dollars in barns. Then old age had come and evil days and poverty. One day they found upon a quay at Nantes a poor wandering creature, who said that she was a dramatic artist, ex-manager of several subsidized provincial theatres, and who had upon her — her whole fortune — a tenuous piece that was no longer current, and a dilapidated volume of Béranger's *Chansons*. Ah! Frétil-

lon ! the girl who frisks about (*frétille*); *Frétillon sans cotillon* ! It was Virginie !

“Theatrical triumphs and earthly loves have their to-morrows. They sent Madame Gérard home to Paris. But in Paris the gulf was wider, that is all. If one is proud, one can die of hunger in greater obscurity in Paris — that is the only advantage. No one here troubled himself about Virginie, and I did not even know that she was here, or that she was still in the world. The poor old girl went about begging and soliciting. A supernumerary here, sweeper there. Requesting the favor of being allowed to let little benches in a wine-shop as earnestly as she would have begged to become a doge’s wife. And repulsed everywhere ! The poor breed fast, those places are scarce and always taken, the young are active, the old are too numerous and life is hard. When I see so many pretty girls jostling one another to get on to the stage, I would like to take them to the asylum down yonder, where the Déjazet of the Célestins, my poor mad manager, hums snatches of chansons in her trembling voice !

“Oh ! monsieur, if I were to live a hundred years — which I am quite capable of doing, but have no desire to do — I should never forget my visits to Virginie at that asylum, where I once saw her, after a paroxysm of madness, locked in a padded cell, like the wildest patients, — poor women, old and young,

whom I could see through the glass scratched by their nails, lying on the straw that they befoul, yelling, sometimes stark naked, tearing their clothes, pressing their distorted faces with hair on end against the glass, as terrible to see as La Sachette at the opening of her Rat Hole in *Notre-Dame de Paris*, and, poor miserable wretches, calling amid their shrieks for a lost child, a wasted fortune, or a faithless lover, — maternity, love, dreams, everything that deceives, everything that lies, everything that kills! Pah! There is melodrama for you!

“Virginie is not always wild in her retreat. Indeed her paroxysms are of rare occurrence. But as for ever recognizing me, *à Dieu vat*, as the sailors say! Her memory has gone to pieces. *N, i, ni, fini*. It was for her sake, therefore, that I organized my benefit. For her, and for Montescure's *Romain*. A twofold object, a twofold spur, a twofold duty.

“A woman who had loved me so dearly! Who had never deceived me! Who said to me — as they all said, but with an accent that the others had not:

“‘I swear to you by my father's head that I have never loved but one being in this world! You!’

“That is worth a little self-sacrifice, is it not?

“To horse, then, to horse, messieurs, for the benefit performance!

“At first I ran against many obstacles. Benefit performances are too common! Statues are being

erected on all sides. It 's a fashion, a career, a career in marble — pardon the pun, I detest that sort of wit.¹

“When a man wishes to enhance his own merit or to put himself forward, he climbs upon the pedestal of a more or less illustrious contemporary. A Committee is appointed, drums are beat for subscriptions, a *matinée* is given at the Trocadéro, and the person in question becomes a public character, purchasing his glory with the money and talents of other people. That such was not my case, I am sure I need not remind you? I may admit in a whisper that there was some little gratification of self-esteem in the prospect of seeing myself as a Roman under the Southern heavens, but it was so trivial a matter in comparison with the joy of performing this duty: the rehabilitation of Montescure, the vanquished sculptor, to say nothing of the mad woman's comfort. For Frétilion's old age, if you please!

“I had relied largely for the success of my undertaking on a certain journalist who has made his way to prosperity, and whom I once knew on Rue Cardinet, up under the roofs, when he was a poor little reporter, stamping his feet to keep warm in winter, and wandering around the streets at all seasons. I

¹ The pun consists in this: that the same word *carrière* means both *career* and *quarry*; *une carrière de marbre* therefore might mean *a career in marble* or *a marble quarry*.

asked him for a bit of an article, a trumpet blast, in the papers that he writes for.

“ ‘ Ah ! my dear Brichanteau,’ he said, ‘ if we had to print a puff for every statue that’s proposed, our columns would n’t hold enough, even with the supplements, and the subscribers would never renew their subscriptions ! We should be nothing but writers of prefaces for Pantheons. All these statues will end by ruining the public. They are breeding too fast. For my own part, I have already subscribed to eleven statues this year, and it’s only May. It’s the same thing with benefits ! Every day we are asked to puff some fresh one, and I see all the fair actresses I used to applaud in the old days, arise with sad faces and outstretched hand from the ashes of my past. They are wrinkled, faded, miserably poor, and they beg me for a few lines by way of alms, — they whom I used to gaze upon with the eyes of an enthralled student, laden with admiration and longing, across the foot-lights ! And from pure selfishness I give them the articles they want ; by commemorating their charms retrospectively, it seems to me that I am commemorating myself. Their old age reminds me of my youth, and I am singing of my youth as I weep for them. But as to your poor devil of a Montescure, your consumptive little cornet-à-piston, your statue of the *Roman under the Yoke* and your lines for the occasion by the poet Cazenave, deputy-mayor of

Garigat-sur-Garonne, how do you suppose those things will interest our readers? What do you suppose Parisians care for them?’

“He was right, from his point of view. The vanquished are always wrong. But in my soul and conscience I was doing my duty, and his objections did not shake my determined zeal.

“‘Very well,’ I said to him, ‘keep your sympathies for your old flames, and I will ask you to do nothing more than announce Montescure’s and Virginie’s benefit. I will undertake the whole thing, I will prepare and organize the whole thing, and I will obtain all I want! And you need say nothing more than that it’s a matter of assisting a mad woman.’

“He began to laugh.

“‘That would be no exception; they all say it!’

“But all of them have not loved me as Virginie did.

“Ah! what a burden I had taken upon my shoulders! What a heavy cart to draw! A benefit, monsieur, a benefit, it is perfect hell. The beneficiary becomes the tiresome solicitor of everybody who has a name or rank or fortune. As a young man I had always refused to peddle tickets to my own benefits in the provinces. My comrades went and cooled their heels in the antechambers of the prefect, the mayor, the general of division, and the influential ladies of the town. Not I. I advertised

my benefit, I put my name in huge letters, and I waited for the sale of seats, very dignified. To tell the truth, I found collaborators among everlasting womankind. Yes, I must confess that most of the time my various managers, friends in spirit or in flesh, undertook themselves to correct what little lack of tact there was in my attitude by going in person to solicit the favor of the authorities for me, and placing boxes and stalls here and there. I was very grateful to them.

"But there was nothing in their soliciting to wound my somewhat sensitive character. Very well; that which my various and, in different degrees, equally amiable managers, had been to poor timid me, I became to one of them, a madwoman. A kind deed done bears fruit one day or another.

"I too carried tickets through the city. I too caused urgent circulars to be lithographed, in which I put forth the best efforts of my heart—style is the mirror of the man.

"MONSIEUR,—

"He who signs these lines is an artist fighting one last fight for a fellow-artist.

"When he says a fellow-artist, he should say two fellow-artists: a dead living woman, a forgotten dead man.

"To lighten the madness that has the former in its grasp, the undersigned asks you for money. For the renown that has shunned the second, he demands the light.

"Light, health, everything is bought and sold. A benefit performance, the programme of which, comprising the greatest names of the stage, will be published later, will give life to her who suffers, will give comfort to the memory of him who has gone.

"Allow me to hope,

"M —

"(Monsieur or Madame),
that you will kindly lend your aid to this twofold manifestation of art and benevolence, and that you will honor with your subscription and your presence the performance to be given at the Théâtre du Châtelet, the —

"With my respectfully fraternal salutations,

"SÉBASTIEN BRICHANTEAU.

"Actor in various theatres of France.

"The Châtelet being a theatre under municipal management, Monsieur Cazenave had obtained the use of the hall, thanks to certain municipal councillors who were friends of his, and whose hearts I had won by telling them of my adventure of 1871, my plan of saving France by kidnapping William. You remember? Having the theatre, it only remained for me to secure the artists. I set about the task.

"Have you ever seen the play *Le Bénéficiaire*, monsieur? No? Then read it. The comedy is exaggerated, if you choose! — but so true! Eternally true. It created a furore when Potier brought it out at the Variétés, in April, 1825, and played it three weeks later at Saint-Cloud, before Charles X. and the court. The old prompter, *L'Essoufflé*, dis-

plays more diplomacy therein, in the interest of his benefit, than Monsieur Talleyrand displayed at the Congress of — I don't know where, — and more energy than Père Pélissier before Sebastopol. He runs after *Monsieur de la Tirade*, tragic actor, he implores *Monsieur du Bémol*,¹ a famous singer, — I smile at the artlessness of the names selected to amuse our fathers, — he flatters Mademoiselle Zéphirine, a dancer of repute; the tenor has a cold, the dancer is tired, the tragedian is packing his trunks for Lille, Strasbourg, or Marseille. But that makes no difference; the beneficiary organizes his benefit and all goes well, until the time for raising the curtain arrives, when, *patatras!* everybody is missing, noble father, princess, moralizer, tenor, and Monsieur L'Essoufflé is compelled to act all alone at his benefit.

“It may be, monsieur, that the vaudeville also is true to nature, as the drama is. I have had some experience of it myself. Indeed, the vaudeville may become tragic, and I have acted in MM. Théaulon and Étienne's comedies with cruel alternations of illusions and despair.

“I had said to myself: —

“‘The benefit will be given for the benefit of a dead friend and a living sweetheart! It must be really extraordinary, this extraordinary performance. It

¹ Monsieur Flat.

must mark an epoch ! It will be my supreme incarnation, and, after making one last appearance before the public I, the forgotten, mingling once more with the illustrious — I will disappear, and with the satisfaction of duty well done will envelop myself in that last memory as the sun envelops himself in a cloak of purple. Very simple. Very dignified.'

"Thereupon I began that painful journey up the staircases of successful comrades. I have good feet and a good eye, luckily, and I need no elevator to go upstairs. And then, to tell the truth, I was well received almost everywhere. Art expands the heart, and my colleagues are good fellows. If you should add together all that actors contribute, in a year, of their strength, their lung power, their nerves, their saliva, their feverish earnestness and their time to the poor, you would realize that they are great purveyors of benevolence. They are always being asked and they always give, and give all they can. I begged, therefore, like the others.

"I played *Le Bénéficiaire*, I tell you, I became Monsieur L'Essouffé for the benefit of somebody else. I described as vividly as possible Virginie's terrible, heart-breaking, desperate condition, and the patriotic purpose of this double-barrelled performance : on the one hand, to provide snuff and other small comforts, a last caress, for a fallen artist ; on the other hand, to procure the last bank-notes necessary to complete a

statue which would do honor at once to the memory of a deceased sculptor — connected with the stage through the orchestra — and to the devotion of a French town to the idea of patriotic protest. In a word, my circular, my little lithographed circular, but expanded and explained.

“ I delivered, redelivered, repeated, began anew that sort of lecture, as forcibly as I could, with an eloquence drawn from my profound conviction, and constantly renewed, and I must say that I seemed to myself to be convincing in my arguments. I picked up accessions to my list as with my hand. I met with some refusals, to be sure, especially on the part of singers, who very often began by saying to me : ‘ If it’s to be at the Trocadéro, you know, don’t count on me ! ’ But let us be just ; singers have to be careful of their voices, and their managers are afraid of hoarseness and *angina pectoris*.

“ One of them said to me : —

“ ‘ I don’t sing anywhere but in churches now ! That’s one way of making up for my past ! ’

“ He had no reason to make up for that glorious past. But, after all, every one is free to have such scruples of conscience as he chooses.

“ The dancers were more obliging. I had prejudices against dancers ; I have none now. They are not simply acrobats, as I used to imagine. They are poets with their great toes. They are silent dreams.

And I am bound to say that their hearts are as big as their calves. Not one of them said no to me.

“ ‘For a comrade who has gone mad? As often as you please!’

“ ‘For the statue of your consumptive sculptor? I will do whatever you want me to!’

“Good girls! So self-sacrificing! And I am speaking of the most famous of them, of those whose photographs you see at the stationers’ and their portraits at the Salon. Generally they have known bad days, they don’t come out of Jupiter’s loins, and poverty, which terrifies them, makes them compassionate. And then, how they dance! They dance gayly, not for the opera-glasses of the rich, but for the empty purses of the poor! They touched my heart, those dancers, touched my heart and charmed me. Ah! if I had been twenty years old.

“These visits, by the way, these stair-climbings, these calls upon comrades who have *names*, have taught me a good bit about the artists of my time. Psychological and practical studies. Adieu to Bohemia, monsieur. We are no longer living in the days of the honest players of Boulevard du Temple, who set up an establishment in common, took pot-luck together, formed a club of bachelors, shared the management of the community, one of them, for example, being assigned to the kitchen; the object being to live economically, to make the

two ends meet, as they say. The actors of to-day, bless my soul! — some of them are good business men and know how to count like treasury inspectors.

“They have galleries of pictures, collections of snuff-boxes. Daltimare — Daltimare has in his rooms canvases by the old masters, which Americans flock there to admire like works in a museum, and even beg to be allowed to purchase them at insane prices; in the first place because the pictures are choice, and secondly because they belong to the Daltimare collection. A good fellow, Daltimare, however, and he put me at my ease at once by promising me his name, his assistance, his influence for my famous performance.

“‘Certainly,’ he said frankly, ‘the least that the great can do is to help out the small!’

“But with that he gave vent to some most amazing theories on art: —

“‘People reproach us for touring, they accuse us of preferring American dollars or the piastres of the hidalgo to Parisian applause. They who tell us that are very kind! Don’t they sell their crops for all they can get for them? Don’t the journalists ask the highest possible price for their articles? My problem of existence is very simple. America? Tableaux! Paris? No tableaux! That is not hard to understand! I am most heartily at your service and that of your poor protégés, Monsieur Brichanteau!’”

"But as I went down the stone staircases, over rugs that felt soft to my feet, of those kings of Paris, deserving of their kingship, I admit, for I have no base envy, I remembered the great, sublime madmen of my day, the wild-eyed romanticists, the courageous victims of bitter hardships. I forgot myself, I swear to you ; I thought only of others, of those whom I have known, loved, admired, and with a little luck — ah ! Luck, the knave ! — might perhaps have equalled ! I thought of Beauvallet's absurd salary from Père Seveste for acting in tragedy at Belleville, and of his selling his *daubs* — for he was a painter — to buy crusts, as he said.¹ Monsieur Beauvallet had told us about his early experiences, and I forgive him now for all his persecution of me, because he was an artist ! He it was who played Orosmane in nankeen trousers in the snow in December ! He it was who, in *Othello*, made his exit playing at leap-frog with Iago, and said to the audience, 'By order of the Council of Ten !' He it was who let loose in the hall a bag full of June bugs he had collected in the Bois de Boulogne, and enlivened the tragedy of *Les Templiers* by the buzzing of their wings. 'June bugs,' said Beauvallet, 'have a taste for tragedy, — a detail never discovered by Monsieur de Buffon.' And such

¹ Another untranslatable play upon words, — *croûte* (crust) being used in painting with the meaning of wretched picture or daub.

epic buffoonery helped to pass the days of fasting. They laughed uproariously and had no need to button their waistcoats tight! Gayety is health.

“And Mélingue, the son of a customs officer, grandson of a volunteer of the Republic, wandering about the country, acting in barns, going from village to village with his friend Tisserant, the future manager of the Odéon, in the cold and snow, like a portable flue of art, earning his bread as he could, the grand, high-spirited artist! Mélingue arriving at Lille, a walled town, after the hour for closing the gates, and passing the night in an abandoned sentry-box, rubbing the legs of his companion, which the north wind had congealed. Mélingue selling a pan of Middle Age short-clothes to pay for the cup of coffee that Tisserant and he drank the next morning to warm themselves. Mélingue beating the drum at Armentières to announce the performance in the evening. Mélingue on his way to Paris, catching frogs and having them cooked by kind-hearted peasants, to whom he recited verses! Mélingue, as stout-hearted against hunger as D'Artagnan against bullets, and winning renown, foot by foot, hardship by hardship, in an assault upon destiny, like a *Mousquetaire* of our art.

And Bocage, escaped from his notary's office, weary of the trade of under-clerk, passing his nights rehearsing his rôles, keeping his neighbors awake and seeing

success approach in the shape of a concierge, who informs Hamlet, Othello, Le Cid, Horace, that he must let the tenants sleep. Bocage, who will play Buridan and scheme to be a supernumerary at Bobino ! All those great names, all those great shades—my youth and its gods—came back to me while I made my way to the apartments of my young comrades of to-day, with their white salons like the boudoirs at Trianon, and their walls and mantelshelves covered with water-colors and Japanese knick-knacks.

“ Ah ! for some it is a prosperous trade, this hard labor of the actor, who churns up his brains studying and investigating, who develops his memory abnormally, passes his nights learning—learning, yes, swallowing rôles that he must soon forget. Observe, I say again, that I have not a shade of envy. Not a shade. I am not happy, no, but I know those—and they are many—who are more unhappy than I ! But it seems to me that life has lacked the little grain of pepper for this new generation ! They have arrived too quickly, by way of roads without ruts. They have been spoiled too much. Oh ! hardship, hardship, that hast caused so much gnawing and pain in my stomach, thou art perhaps the best condiment for an artistic life. When one has had nothing to eat but thee day after day, the smallest morsel of bread and butter has an ambrosial sweetness.

"I fell in with more than one who said to me, as he promised his assistance : —

" 'It will be a most excellent opportunity to play a new piece of mine !'

" 'Of yours, my dear master ?'

"But after all, why not ? They who know how to interpret should know how to create.

"Others seized the opportunity to say to me : —

" 'I am at your service on condition that I may act in this or that great rôle which my idiot of a manager refuses to give me, on the pretext that *he can't imagine me acting it.*'

"The women said Célimène ; the men, Ruy Blas or Alceste. Montdidier insisted upon Ryssoor, in *Patrie* ! A masterpiece, I tell you !

"People are surprised because we are determined, at any price, to play certain rôles that fascinate us, — Célimène or Silvia, when one is a woman and a great flirt ; Alceste or Hernani, when one is a man and plays leading rôles. But it is perfectly natural ! When one has been Célimène or the Misanthrope, though for a single evening only, one continues to be Célimène or the Misanthrope all one's life. Nothing, nothing in the world, can interfere with your *having played* that part. No matter how great a failure you may have made, you touched the stars, you won the cup one evening. Napoléon, yes, Napoléon, even when he was a prisoner on the rock of St. Helena,

had won the battle of Friedland none the less. Neither Hudson Lowe nor anybody else could take that away from him. Célimène, Hernani, — those are our Friedlands. And more, the victories of art are more noble in this, that they cost no one any blood. Is not that your opinion?

“ However, to return to our *moutons*, I had succeeded in arranging a programme, a beautiful programme. The Théâtre du Châtelet had not often had such a performance as that. Dances, songs, a comedy, monologues, an act from *Les Burgraves* done by myself, Dorfeuil, and Richardet, — Opéra, Opéra-Comique, Comédie-Française, Variétés, the whole alphabet. I had kept watch over the printers to the best of my ability, knowing the sensitiveness, the natural sensitiveness of artists. They are sometimes blamed for their self-esteem. The fact is that the slightest injustice may cause them to lose, in a single evening, all the ground they have gained in long years.

“ I was very sure, then, that I had made no mistakes in the classification of my collaborators. The Opéra and the Comique in the order of their dates, the number of years since their foundation, and their artists in order of seniority. Very simple. But the others! There was the rub. Three hours after the first placard was posted on the Morris pillars, I received remonstrances — little blue slips, telegrams : —

"‘I am not accustomed to follow Mademoiselle Stella of the Bouffes. I beg you to be kind enough to strike off my name.

“‘EMMA ROGER,
of the Folies-Dramatiques.’

"‘MONSIEUR BRICHANTEAU,—I believed that dramatic artists were more important in your eyes than singers. It seems not, judging from your posters. Let your tenors play melodrama too. I will not take part with you in *Les Burgraves*.

“‘DORFEUIL.’

"‘*Les Burgraves*! I had advertised it to come after Ambroise Thomas’s *Mignon*, because I was to play in it; I had done it from modesty. Dorfeuil did not understand me. Adieu to *Les Burgraves*! I had no time to find another Job. Into the water with my *Burgraves*.

"I answered blue slip for blue slip, letter for letter. I tried to prevent defections, to stop the fugitives. But the telegrams succeeded one another with painful regularity. The tenor had a bad cold. I had to strike out *Mignon*. My elocutionist excused himself. He was forced to go into the provinces to perform for the benefit of a work of charity. The *Pavane*, the *Pavane*, which was a drawing card, went to pieces like *Les Burgraves*. The singer had a cold, the *danseuse* a sprain. An epidemic, monsieur, a veritable epidemic, demolished, decimated, wrought havoc in my programme.

"Thereupon I made up another, I drew up another advertisement. Every morning I had a different programme. And the printer said to me: 'Why, with all these changes, you'll ruin yourself in bills for printing!' These everlasting modifications, by the way, proved fatal to the sale of seats. At first there was a cloud of buyers at the box-office. The clerk there felt very confident. The ticket-speculators, those harbingers of success, hovered about the Châtelet. But, as the little blue slips compelled me to change my announcement, those same harbingers flapped their wings and flew away, the sale of seats stopped, and the clerk became sceptical.

"What was I to do? Postpone the performance? Wait till the sprain was cured for the *Pavane*, and the inflammation of the throat for *Mignon*? '*Postponed on account of illness.*' Very good. But when should I succeed again in bringing together the few obliging souls who had remained true to me? Would my municipal councillor obtain the Châtelet again? The season was advancing, too; I could hear the stamping and neighing of the approaching Grand Prix. After that great day Paris is empty. And Cazenave wrote me that if the people of Garigat-sur-Garonne did not scrape together the balance necessary for the dedication of the *Roman*, they would postpone that ceremony until the Greek Kalends. And, lastly, Virginie Gérard needed the comforts which

my devotion owed to her sufferings. Furthermore, I had said that the performance should be given on the date fixed! I must, I was fully determined that I would, keep my word. Brichanteau has always done it.

“And the appointed date arrived, monsieur, May 31st! I shall never forget that day! The newspapers had announced the performance kindly enough, I am bound to say, and my former friend the reporter, become a young master, even found a way to use words with reference to me which touched and saddened me: ‘*An old but eminent actor — an unwearied champion of the national drama — an unappreciated hero —*’ I pass it by and others less kindly. The posters were enormous, very conspicuous, well adapted for success; and despite the voluntary or — what shall I say? — *sanitary* desertions, I had *names*, I still had enough *names* to ensure good receipts.

“But, monsieur, everything conspired against me, everything! — elements and men.

“I had counted upon rain. The sun rose, an implacable sun, the consecrated sun of which Phèdre speaks, devouring and magnificent. The thermometer climbed that day to dog-day heights. One felt more like taking a bath than going to the theatre. The sidewalks blazed like sullied mirrors. And still the little blue slips, the telegrams, rained down in the

manager's room at the Châtelet or in my humble dwelling at Batignolles. That was the only rain that fell. But it was drenching.

"The *names* scuttled away like rabbits. I had twelve on the evening of the 29th, I had but seven on the 30th. On the 31st, in the morning, but three remained. I sadly looked over my programme, so laboriously constructed. Nine, I lacked nine names! The number of the Muses!

"And I did not despair even then.

"They are failing you, Brichanteau. They are false to the promise given to Montescure's shade and Virginie's phantom. But you are here, at your post, faithful to duty! Multiply yourself, Brichanteau, and show the public that one man of strong will and of resource is, in himself alone, as good as a multitude, especially when the multitude is absent!"

"If the public remained faithful to me, the rest was of small account. '*I, said I, and that is enough!*' I would recite poetry. I would play detached scenes, I would, in case of need, go through with the scene from *Le Vieux Caporal*, as pantomime is coming into fashion again. I knew the realistic scenes of my old comrade, Henri Monnier. I would repeat them, and the audience should see that the famous *rosserie*, which is thought to be a new invention, does not date from to-day. We could be *rosses* too, at need, but we were *rosses* from our hearts! In short, I was

resolved to do everything, act Master Jacques and Proteus at once, for Montescure and Virginie !

"And the public would think well of me for it. Only, the public did not come. No, the public did not come. Oh ! not at all ! The vast auditorium of the Châtelet, when I looked in, wore the aspect of a great empty ship. A few boxes occupied, spectators scattered among the stalls, a few seats taken in the balcony, the galleries deserted. The pit alone was full ; but who occupied it ? The *claque*. They brought me the first bulletin of receipts : —

"Two thousand seven hundred and eighty francs !

"In view of the general expenses, the carriages sent, and bouquets purchased in advance for the few actresses — it was necessary to do things decently, was it not ? — 2,780 francs was nothing at all. It was disastrous ! Indeed I began to wonder if I should not be out of pocket when everything was settled. And the contents of my pocket were not heavy enough to drag me to the bottom in case of shipwreck.

"2,780 !

"Poor Virginie ! Poor Montescure !

"But no matter ! I must show a brave face to fortune and act for the good people who had had confidence in Sébastien Brichanteau and responded to his appeal. Rare, but choice, were those noble hearts, those intelligent *connoisseurs*, persistent and loyal. They had brought their money — not in streams, no

—but what matter! I owed them something for their money! And as each fresh blue slip brought me some fresh excuse, I valiantly announced the fact, and offered, modestly but resolutely, to fill the gap.

“‘Instead of the *Corsetier*, the recitation announced on the programme, will you kindly listen, messieurs and mesdames, to *La Grève des Forgerons*, soliloquy by François Coppée, recited by your humble servant? An admirable production, by the way.’

“At the first announcement nothing was said. Indeed there was some applause. At the second there was a little murmuring. At the third they lost their temper. But at the fourth, they concluded to laugh it off, and even overwhelmed me with applause when, taking the bull by the horns at last, I declared that, in order not to impose upon the good-will of the audience, I was ready to make good all the defections, replace all the absentees, *en bloc*.

“‘So that, messieurs, what the performance loses in variety, it will gain in unity!’

“I had presence of mind to add:—

“‘Would that it were the same in politics, for the pacification of parties!’

“That did the business. One conquers an audience with random shafts. I had mine in my hand. All the *names* might slink away. The performance was assured. When they saw me return to the stage they did not even take the trouble to look

for the defaulter's name on the programme. After that there was a tacit compact between the audience and myself. I was the great *Substitute*, as I had been the great Gonfalonier in *Les Horreurs de Florence*, an unpublished drama which I created at Valparaiso.

"And if I did not grow hoarse during that afternoon of May 31st, it was because my thunder is not yet extinct. I recited there at the Châtelet the equivalent of fourteen acts in lines of twelve feet. Satires, sonnets, elegies, fragments of dramas, — I recited everything. All that my memory has retained of noble thoughts I tossed to that crowd. When I say crowd, I mean the chosen few who brought me 2,780 francs! I delivered my stock. I was tired, but not exhausted. I played, I went and came, I paced the huge stage, I shrieked, I murmured, I wept! The 2,780 francs were not stolen, on my soul!

"Alas! what was the use of all that courage? When the performance was over and my account settled with the cashier, I was behind-hand. I was well aware that the authors whose works I had drawn upon would waive their claims for the benefit of the poor. The public official who was in attendance would also make a reduction in his percentage. But in spite of everything I had my finger upon a ghastly deficit. Or, even if I succeeded in rescu-

ing a few hundreds of francs after all my cabs and bouquets were paid for, it would be the utmost I could expect, and Montescure's pedestal would not profit to the extent of a bit of stone, nor Virginie's nostrils, once so pink, to the extent of a dozen pinches of snuff!

"I was sitting in the manager's office, with my eyes on those devilish figures, twisting them this way and that, those figures that jest no more than love, and are even less elastic — oh! that Art should be forced to square accounts with Money! — when a succession of light taps on the door made me ask:—

" 'Who's there?'

" 'Come in,' added the manager.

"And I saw in the doorway a little old man, thin and wrinkled, but neat and fashionably dressed, who walked toward me with outstretched hand, saying:—

" 'Bravo! Ah! my old Brichanteau, what a voice! What faith! what heart! We are the only ones, you see; we were cut from the heart of the oak! Don't you know me?'

"I searched my memory. It was very vague, but it did seem to me that I recognized the face of an acquaintance in those shrunken features.

" 'Lanteclave! How now, is this the way you forget old friends?'

"He had no sooner told me his name than a whole chapter in my past life rushed into my mind

and I threw myself upon his neck. Lanteclave ! To be sure ! An old colleague at the *Célestins* ! A comrade of the glorious evenings at Lyon !

“ ‘I thought you were dead, my poor old friend,’ I said.

“ ‘Do people die?’ he rejoined with a laugh. ‘Yes, I have heard so. Don’t believe a word of it. It’s all pessimistic nonsense !’

“ He was always a jovial fellow. He was a member of the *Caveau*. Thin, wizened, dried-up, the little slip from a Bordelais vine still retained some sap in his veins.

“ He had been present at the performance. He had paid for his seat. * He had applauded me over and over again and recalled me. Oh ! a kindly audience and a kindly comrade was Lanteclave !

“ ‘But,’ he said, ‘the thing that disturbs me is that you had only half a house, poor fellow.’

“ I shook my head : —

“ ‘If I only had had half a house !’

“ And I handed him the box-office report.

“ ‘I have got to put my hand in my pocket, old man, and my pocket has a hole in it !’

“ ‘Ah ! indeed?’ said the little man. ‘Ah ! poor Brichanteau ! And poor Virginie !’

“ ‘Yes, yes,’ I replied, ‘you may well pity her, for, as for me, a maravedi more or less — But, by the way, Lanteclave, about Virginie?’

“ ‘Well! about Virginie?’ ”

“ ‘She was your manager, was n’t she?’ ”

“ ‘There was a sparkle in Lanteclave’s eye when he smiled.

“ ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘she was my manager. That fool of a husband of hers! Do you remember the Célestins? Ah! well, if the poor woman is in need of anything and you have n’t made any money, Brichanteau, permit me to contribute for her the allowance to which I am entitled by article 34 of the statutes of the *Association of Artists*!—a fine association; a fine man, Baron Taylor. You can belong to the Association after one year’s exercise of the profession; you pay an assessment of a franc a month, and you are entitled—entitled, you understand—to a regular allowance, one year after your admission, in addition to the retiring pension of five hundred francs! When you can’t pay your board, they hand it to you by way of allowance, and all is said! Potosi, eh?’ ”

“ ‘No,’ I muttered, ‘not Potosi, not the Transvaal, but bread in one’s old age! I ought to have joined the Association! Stubborn men make a great mistake!’ ”

“ ‘Well,’ continued Lanteclave, ‘the allowance to which I am entitled—fifty francs—and my pension for this year, I will contribute to the receipts of your performance! I contribute them

to your Montescure and' — the same gleam of light brightened his small gray eyes — 'to Virginie — our Virginie.'

"He had beyond question used the word *our* with a motive, as we say on the stage.

"Our Virginie? Why our Virginie? I dreaded — it was foolish enough at my age! — I dreaded to question him. But he did not give me time to frame a question.

"'Can I tell you the whole truth, Brichanteau?'

"'Certainly.'

"'You won't be angry?'

"'Why should I be angry?'

"'At all events the matter is outlawed —'

"'Go on, pray go on!'

"Lanteclave irritated me.

"'Well, you remember, at Lyon —'

"'Do I remember!'

"'The *Célestins*?'

"'Yes.'

"'Gentil-Bernard?'

"'Yes, yes, yes!'

"'Do you remember that sometimes, when you were waiting for the mistress over Perrache way, she told you that she had a tooth to be looked after, and that she had been detained at her dentist's?'

"'Do I remember!'

"'Look you, Brichanteau, she no more had a

tooth to be attended to than you had. The dentist, my dear boy, the dentist —'

"Still the little sparkle in his eye.

" 'The dentist was you!' I cried.

"He had the good taste, while making his confession, to assure me that Virginie passed her sessions with him protesting that she adored me, and that she did not know why she deceived me. Perhaps it was simply because Lanteclave sang Béranger's *chansons* extremely well!

"I did not lose my temper, monsieur. It would have been a mockery to unsheath the rapier for posthumous treachery and to play Don Gormas for a faithless sweetheart, who was confined at Villejuif, poor creature! No matter. It seemed to me a bitter thing to have climbed so many staircases and played *Le Bénéficiaire* without profit, to arrive at that result, — to discover that that vanished dream, yes, that last little rosy dream, was a soap-bubble, which burst like the others.

"Virginie! Frétilon, the Frétilon who swore to me that she had never loved but one being in the world, myself, and swore it on her father's head! Her father's head must have had a sorry time of it!

"However, as it is said that every one must have been deceived at some time, I preferred to have been deceived by Lanteclave than by any other. He was clean at least, well-dressed, close-mouthed,

was the little Southerner, now so thin and insignificant. Her dentist!— I tell you, when I think of that ! Her dentist !

‘ Combien je regrette
Son bras si dodu,
Sa jambe bien faite
Et le temps perdu ! ’

“ That is my latest adventure, monsieur, and I stop at that. I shall never be seen upon the boards again. Room for the young men !— Virginie will have her snuff and chocolate tablets ; but deuce take me if Garigat-sur-Garonne ever sees my effigy, my statue. The man who cast it has not been paid. So I await orders, tossed among the débris, relegated to obscurity, forgotten ! And the new municipal authorities think that to revive warlike ideas is to aim a blow at the fraternal idea of the federation of nations !

“ Very good, pack your trunks, Brichanteau ! If you close the books with unsatisfactory receipts, at all events you will not end with an unworthy action ! ”

And when I told him he was, in very truth, an unselfish heart and a fine fellow, — passing from Montescure’s pillow to Virginie Gérard’s cell, — Sébastien Brichanteau rose from the bench on which we were sitting and drew himself up.

“ It is certain,” he said, “ that the police might make a descent upon my conscience as a man and an artist and find nothing suspicious there ; I do not

fear the perquisitions of hired bravos. But don't you think of such a thing as giving me a prize, or even a certificate of virtue. The devil! That would be simply ridiculous. There was an actor named Moessard, who had some talent. He made the mistake of committing some noble action or other outside of the theatre. The Academy awarded him a prize for virtue, and, *patatras*, the poor fellow was known by no other name than the *Virtuous Moessard* in the papers, and never got over it. Imagine the *Virtuous Moessard* playing the rôle of a seducer or traitor! Not too much praise, monsieur. For Montescure on his deathbed, as for poor mad Virginie, I did what any man of heart would have done. Self-sacrifice is my strong point.

"And now, *addio*! The blue visions have vanished. The stage gave me illusions in my youth; in my old age the velodrome will give me bread!"

He walked away in the direction of Avenue Velasquez, and the setting sun cast the exaggerated shadow of the old actor on the gravel of the path. I looked around me at the cheerful prospect in that little retreat, Parc Monceau, full of the cries of children, the songs of birds, and abounding in bright colors and animation. The golden rays of the setting sun fell in patches on the white paths, in streaks through the green foliage of the trees, in broad sheets upon the

velvety lawns, dotted here and there with buttercups and white marguerites.

And Brichanteau paused from time to time, to indulge in yet another picturesque reflection.

Pointing to the Snake-charmer on his pedestal, with the serpent twined about his flute and the rich bronze, gleaming like copper in the hot sun, —

“Snake-charmer, man-charmer, beware the venom of reptiles!” he said, shaking his head.

Farther on, stretching out his hand toward some old men with white mustaches sitting on the brown wooden benches, — old men with red boutonnières and gray hair, retired officers, who were talking over their battles, drawing plans of chimerical strategic movements in the dust, with the ends of their worn-out canes, he said: —

“They too are vanquished heroes!”

An old painter with a broad-brimmed felt hat, bent double on a folding stool, was copying in water-color a cluster of red roses, in a thicket of flowers, and inquisitive urchins were watching him paint, the bright hues of the flowers rolling down the paper like open, bleeding wounds.

“And he,” said Brichanteau, “he too thinks perhaps that he will unhang the stars!”

He added, trying to laugh: —

“Failures of the army, failures in painting, failures of the stage! An army corps could be organized

with the vanquished ones of life who have not deserved their defeat !”

But his tone was more bitter than usual, in the brilliancy and glitter of that beautiful June sun ; he became melancholy amid the signs of renewed youth in that lovely park where the children ran hither and thither, living flowers, — straw hats and navy blue collars, red dresses or muslin skirts, — where the white hawthorn, the azaleas, the tulips, displayed their lovely coloring against a background of verdure.

The old actor’s eyes, scorched by so many foot-lights, seemed to be storing up all the light, all the joyous gayety of the little creatures laughing with life among the fresh spring flowers, — storing it up before returning to the half light of the gloomy lodging at Batignolles.

Before taking leave of me he said, with a caressing glance around the park : —

“Fine scenery, monsieur, for a Louis XV. drama ! I have played the Regent before curtains that were not to be compared to yonder trees ! For I too have been an aristocrat, monsieur ! Ah, yes ! the Regent, in Bouilhet’s *Mademoiselle Aïssé* ! Louis Bouilhet, the last of the romanticists ! The last ! — With me !”

A sad smile, a grasp of the hand, a last gesture. And — as if through a *real door* on the stage — Brichanteau left the park by the gate on Avenue Velasquez.

I looked after him. Very erect, walking slowly, with his head high, he passed along Boulevard des Batignolles, shaking his head, stopping at times to gaze, with his haughty air of disdain, at the stream of cabs, trams, and bicycles that deafened him without stifling his thought; then I saw him, in the distance, turning toward his home, a living shade swallowed up in the crowd, devoured by fate, and lost in the indistinct clamor and fierce press of mighty Paris.

But stay! Would he not find, at his lodgings, in one of his drawers, a lock of hair, a forgotten photograph — and upon the white wood shelves of his poor book-case, beneath the old faded wreaths, an old, soiled volume of Hugo, or even an unbound pamphlet of Bouchardy's?

His whole youth! Love and glory, his dreams!

And with those phantoms, it may be — who can say? — that Sébastien Brichanteau, French actor, of all the theatres in France, was happy!

THE END.

